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THE ROAD TO SINHARAT
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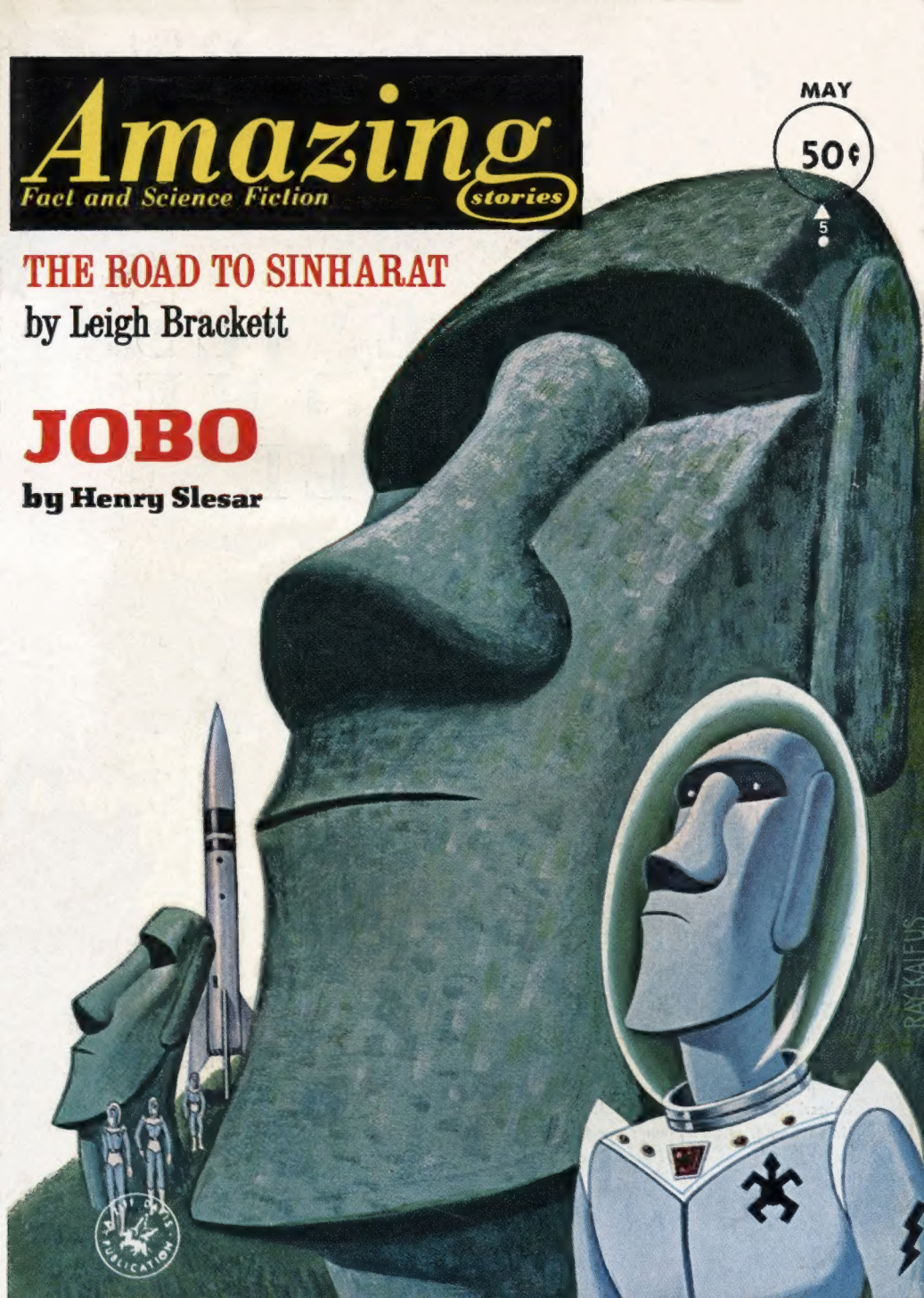
by Henry Slesar



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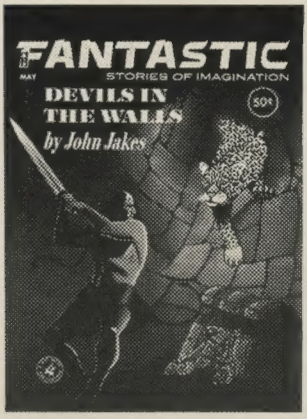

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Amazing
Fact and Science Fiction Stories

May, 1963 Vol. 37, No. 5

REG. U. S. PAT. OFF.

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• *Herewith we give final heresay to the "Superman-Common man" controversy:*

Dear Miss Goldsmith:

After reading Lorne Yacuk's letter in your column of the January issue of this magazine I feel compelled to take Mr. Yacuk up on his challenge for an orderly difference of opinion. Although I do agree with Mr. Yacuk on several of his conclusions I would like to show him that he is full of beans on several other counts.

It is true that in the early stages of sf there were some great heroes, such as the incomparable John Carter. But in my reading I came across many more dull, pointless stories than I did of the exciting super-hero type. Quite to the contrary, there were almost none of the he-men which in any way resembled Burroughs' model. Mr. Yacuk raved about the merits of your anniversary issue and on your reprints. Let it be known to him that you have the pick of over 35 years of writing from which to choose your selections. For every good or passing "old" story that you print there are hundreds of rejects.

The most depressing part of Mr. Yacuk's poison pen letter was the part in which he thoroughly condemned the type of writing predominant today. He falsely and thoughtlessly denied the existence of the "common man or drunken bum who saves the world from impending doom type stories" in his own closed mind. I have tried to see his point of view, but as hard as I try certain memories come back. I am haunted with the delightful visions of Orwell's *1984*, van Vogt's *Slan*, Bester's *Demolished Man*, Pohl and Kornbluth's works satirizing todays various vocational institutions, and Wyndham's outcry against conformity, *Re-Birth*. Others also come to mind: the best serial I have ever read, *Second Ending* by White published in FANTASTIC; the strange works of Tenn, Sheckley, Bloch, Heinlein, and Matheson.

I say that Mr. Yacuk is incor-

(*Continued on page 127*)

EDITORIAL

The New Yorker magazine, which normally does not even care to admit of the existence of such a literary form as science fiction (probably because sf stories have plots with beginnings, middles and ends, which *The New Yorker* fiction editors abhor), recently paid sf the tribute of devoting its book review section to a laudatory discussion of the writings of Arthur Clarke. And, by inference and extension, we presume, it also extended its approving welcome to the modern kind of sf that rests on good writing, daring imagination, and scientific plausibility.

At any rate, the review specifically commended Clarke's new anthology, *Tales of Ten Worlds* (published by Harcourt, Brace & World), as "a vivid blend of reality and irreality." (Do you suppose the New Yorker writer meant "*un*reality?) One of the stories in the collection is singled out for special praise. It is "Before Eden," a short tale of how two American space explorers, by contaminating a plant on Venus with bacteria from some of the debris they carelessly deposit, kill life on the planet just as it is getting under way. "Beneath the clouds of Venus," Clarke wrote in his final sentence, "the Story of Creation was ended."

We agree that this was a marvelously touching story. As a matter of fact, we agreed about this long ago, when we first bought and published it in the June, 1961, issue of AMAZING. We agreed so much that we blazoned it on our cover as the leading story of that issue.

We're glad *The New Yorker* is finally coming to recognize the place of literate science fiction in the realm of books. We're glad the magazine thinks Arthur Clarke is a great sf writer. But we are a little sad to see such sophisticated editors seemingly unaware that other folks have come to these conclusions before them. And we are a little more sad that the editors did not bother in any way to indicate that the story they liked so much was published two years ago by other editors. And most of all we're sad that *The New Yorker* would let a word like "irreality" get into print. It's such an unreal word.—NL

JOBO

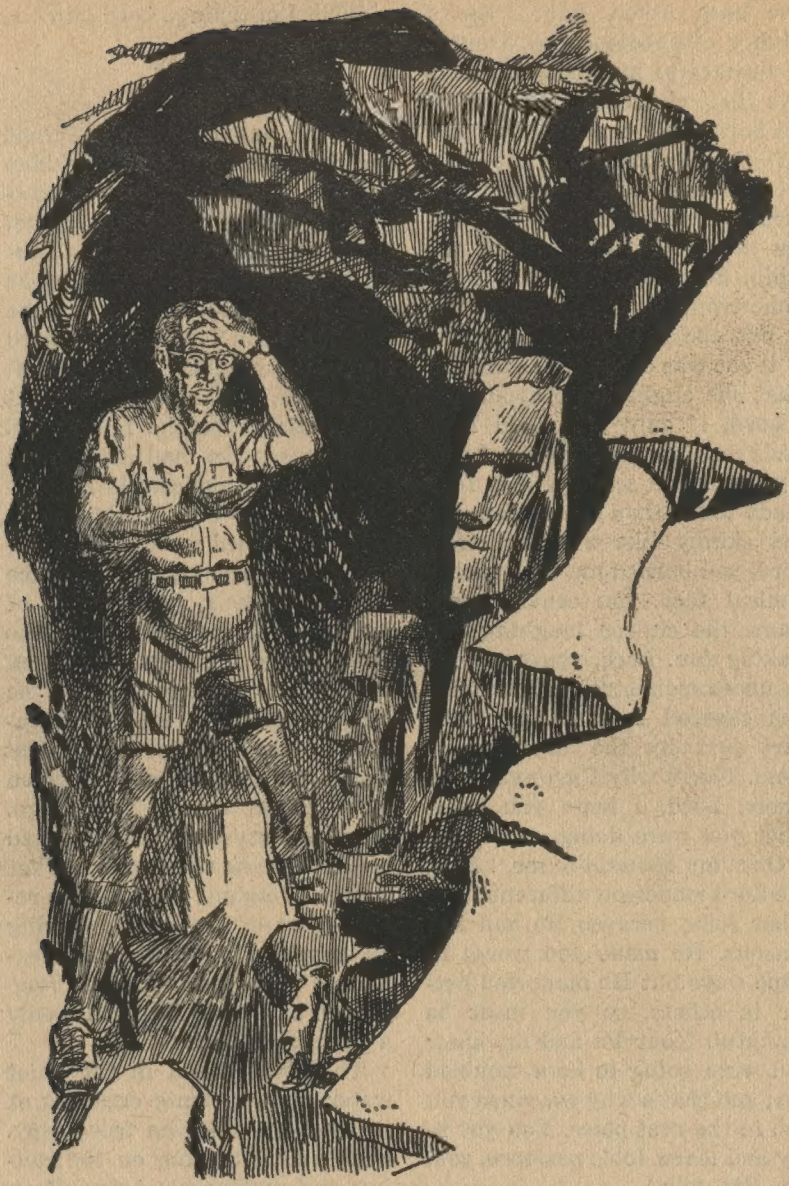
By HENRY SLESAR
Illustrated by SUMMERS

Seldom has the mystery posed by the great stone statues of Easter Island been so ingeniously . . . so sympathetically . . . "solved" as in this tender, touching, exciting extrapolation by one of sf's finest writers.

WHEN they poke fun at me I keep shet. Grin and bear it my Ma says and there's nobody around these parts can champion me for grinning, I got the face for it. Sometimes the funning gets tiresome, all them little ones romping around me like a maypole and saying them words to set me hurting and them to laughing. Only now the big chilren already out know how peaceable I am and that don't make the grinning easy. The big chilren ain't content with hurting words, they get downright mean sometimes. You take that Micah Werneke, he started flinging rocks at me once and almost pushed the patience clean out of my head. I was fixing to hurt Micah Werneke that day, and lucky for him Ma came along and stopped me. She whomped me good on account of I tried to get my evens, and that whomping hurt me worse than the rocks Micah threw.

What I mean by "hurt" is this. Ma says I don't "hurt" like other folks. She says that's the way the good Lord made me, with a hide like a behemoth. When Ma whomps me it ain't the pain that hurts, it's all the crying Ma does. The tears roll down her face and I feel so bad inside that pretty soon I'm blubbering like a babe. I don't know what other folks mean by hurt, but that hurting inside me is a terrible sadness.

Well, I read the Bible dutiful like Ma wanted me to, and no offense, Lord, but I still can't figure the ways of folks. Every Sunday I hear Preacher Quilk and he says God put us all down here in the sweet hills of Tennessee to



love each other, but I see a mighty disobedience all around. It appears to me that only Mas love their chilren, on account of Ma is the only one loves me. She says that Pa loved me, too, only Pa went and died the year I was born and Ma had to bury him under the scrub pine back of the cabin. Some days, after I come home troubled, I used to see Ma go out and kneel by Pa's grave, as if she was out there asking Pa what she ought to do about me.

Lord, if only you could have made me little. Even when I was a youngun in school I was four heads taller than the others, tall and skinny like a naked tree. Lord, you borned me with such a comical face you could hardly blame the chilren laughing and making fun. Lord, you made me so uncommon strong that folks was skeered I would do them hurt just by the touching of them. That's why I growed up so lonely, Lord, I hope you know what you were doing.

Once my Ma said to me, "Jobo, the Lord made you different from other folks because He had His reasons. He made you worse in some ways but He made you better in others, so you must be thankful. Your Pa and me knew you were going to be a troubled boy, and that's why we called you Job in the first place. You got to try and learn Job's patience, son, it's His will."

Well, I'm trying, Lord, ain't I.

* * *

EVEN as the trawler crept through the darkening blue waters surrounding the lava-strewn coast of Easter Island, even as he caught his first glimpse of the mysterious stone monoliths standing sentry in the interior, John Tilletson regretted the decision that had brought him there. Instead of excitement and anticipation, he felt gloom. The theory he had expounded with such enthusiasm in a wood-paneled study back in Crawford, Illinois, seemed weak and untenable when brought face to face with this lonely, petrified bit of land fixed in the vastness of the South Seas. He was strictly an armchair archeologist, he thought bitterly; his last excavation, just prior to the accident which had lamed him, had taken place almost twenty years ago. He was sixty-three; he dragged his left leg; he tired easily. What was he doing out here, in this remote part of the world, seeking an answer that had eluded explorers from the Dutchman Roggeveen in 1722 to Heyerdahl only a few years back?

The ship rocked in the quiet water, the rhythmic creaking of its lines making him feel sleepy. Beside him, leaning on the railing and puffing his briar, Dave

Leyton regarded the island with an expression of interest that Tilletson envied. But Dave was young, strong-minded and strong-bodied, and even if Tilletson suspected that he was more amused than convinced by Tilletson's theory, he had been willing to plunge into the venture cheerfully. For a moment, Tilletson looked at Dave's handsome profile and almost hated it. That was an emotion he squelched quickly; there was a possibility that Dave would be his son-in-law one day.

"I wish you'd let Alma come," Dave said, as if reading his thoughts. "She'd have gotten a kick out of seeing this."

"I didn't tell her not to come. I just didn't feel like encouraging her. Besides, she had all that work to do on her thesis, she couldn't let that go much longer."

"Thesis!" Dave said. "Doesn't that all seem so trivial now? Look at those things. The Gods of Easter Island! Gives you the chills, doesn't it?"

Tilletson was chilled, but it was only by the coolness of the night air. He shivered, straightened up with a groan, and mumbled something about going below. He left Dave at the railing, still sucking on his pipe and musing romantically over the approaching island.

On his bunk, he lay awake and tried to stem the rush of thoughts that came between him and sleep. Thoughts of Crawford, of the university town where he had made his home, where he had met and married and suffered the loss of his wife; thoughts of Alma, his daughter, that astonishing mixture of beauty and intelligence. He found himself longing to see her; why hadn't he encouraged her to come along?

It was Alma who first heard a full explanation of his theory, on the day that the package arrived from Professor Clurman. Clurman was an old friend, an oceanographer whose studies in the Galapagos had earned him a deal of scholastic fame. It had been ten years since Clurman had written him, and the arrival of the square, heavily-wrapped package excited their curiosity. The accompanying letter read:

Dear John,

A native on Easter Island sold me this artifact for an unreasonable sum, swearing on his ancestors that he had removed it from the belly of a large fish. I recalled, with some pleasure, the evening we spent discussing the mystery of the stone statues on Easter, and laughing over your theory concerning the visitors from outer space. Upon examination of the enclosed object, you will understand why I thought you should be the first to interpret its significance. I will quickly add that the gentleman who

made the transaction was a bandit if I have ever seen one, but if nothing else, I hope this little gift will adorn your study, and remind you of the good conversations we used to enjoy.

Fondly,
Everett

THE object that Tilletson removed from the box was a statue not more than twelve inches in height, of some heavy dull metal encrusted with green. The resemblance between the object and the stone idols of Rapa Nui was immediately apparent, as were the differences. Where the monoliths of Easter Island were crude in form, the details of the tiny statute were exquisitely fine. Despite its crusted surface, he could see that the sculptor had reproduced even the texture of the skin on the metal figure. And of course, there had never been any work in metals on Easter Island; the media of the ancient craftsmen were stone and wood. It was obviously some modern artisan who had made it, and the resemblance to the gods of Easter Island was probably deliberate.

"It's beautiful," Alma said. "I've never seen such a perfect miniature, Father, do you suppose it's valuable?"

"I wouldn't really know," he smiled. "Not as an archeological object. I doubt if it's very old."

"Couldn't we clean it up and see what it really looks like?"

Tilletson's statement about the statue's age seemed confirmed when they cleaned it. The green patina disappeared completely with soaking, and the statue took on a satiny gleam not unlike silver.

"I'll admit it's unusual," he said. "It's too hard to silver; perhaps it's some kind of alloy. And the carving is amazingly fine . . ."

"What did Professor Clurman mean, about your theory?"

Her father laughed. "Everett has a good memory. That was a long time ago, and I'd almost forgotten it. Do you really want to hear about it?"

"Of course."

* * *

"By now, I suppose everyone has heard of the mystery of Easter Island. It's one of those archeological riddles that interest even the general public, that Sunday newspapers like to make a periodical splash about. It's the most desolate of the islands of Polynesia, and yet it seems to have supported one of the earliest civilizations. But of course, the most astonishing feature of Easter Island is its strange stone gods.

"Thirty to sixty feet high, these mammoth figures had been

hacked out of a stone quarry with primitive hand tools, mysteriously transported and raised all over the island without the aid of mechanical equipment. They were all alike, long-eared, long-nosed, thin-bodied figures, with a topknot of red stone balanced on their heads. There were hundreds of them on the islands, their gigantic faces upturned to the sky, and no one has yet offered a completely satisfying explanation of how they were created, by whom and for what reason.

"The Dutch Admiral Roggeveen was the first European to see them, and to meet the descendants of the original builders. They were a strange people, these descendants, apparently sun-worshipers who also venerated birds. Many had artificially-lengthened ears, many were unusually tall, more than six and a half feet, and with bright red hair. The resemblance to the statues was obvious. On the other hand, the majority of the natives were of purely Polynesian descent—an odd mingling of races.

"The Spanish, the English, the French, all followed the Dutchman on explorations of the island, and after each visit, a little more was revealed about the place—for instance, the fact that the island contained dozens of secret caves, shelters created by the islanders as refuges against some unknown invader. To this day, we don't know what it was they feared.

"Modern explorations have told us more about the ancient culture of Easter Island. Heyerdahl's expedition helped explain the mystery of the statues' carving, their methods of transportation and erection of the grave sites they called *ahus*. Other statues and artifacts, linking the early settlers with the ancient Peruvians, have been uncovered. Nevertheless, the stone gods remained a purely local mystery, having no prototype anywhere else on Earth. Driven by some unknown compulsion, undoubtedly religious, the earliest inhabitants of Easter Island sweated and labored for years over this incredible project, surmounting enormous difficulties to raise their stone idols all over the island they called 'The Navel of the World' and 'The Eye Which Sees Heaven.'

IT might have been that latter name which first caused me to mention my theory to Clurman. I had been reading an article about Easter Island in the archeological journal, and I discussed it with Clurman one evening.

"It seemed possible to me that the original inhabitants of Rapa Nui were indeed Polynesians, and that the long-eared, red-headed race was an alien invader—an invader who had first been feared

then accepted, and later worshipped as gods. Fear would explain the building of the subterranean refuges. The presence of the long-ears' descendants would prove the acceptance. The stone idols with the red topknots would, of course, indicate the worship. When Clurman asked me where I thought the long-eared invaders had come from, I said, why outer space, naturally.

"I suppose I was only joking at the beginning. But even a humorous theory can have its rationale. Wasn't it possible, I said, that some alien race had come to Earth and made their first stop in the remoteness of the South Seas? They could have been manlike creatures who had resembled the Easter Island gods, creatures who had developed pretty much along the evolutionary lines of Earthmen, and who were capable of mating with our species. Their space ship, of course, would have been the 'bird' which was later venerated by the islanders, the fact that they came out of the sun would lead naturally to sun-worship. As a reward for the islander's hospitality, they would have shown them how to develop the meager resources of the barren island, how to use its stone and volcanic debris in the construction of edifices—that would explain the extraordinary masonry work of the primitive builders. The visitors from outer space would have remained on the island for some time, until they either died out or left, leaving not only red-headed descendants behind them, but people to remember them as great gods who came from Heaven. It was in their sacred memory that the statues were created. That was what I told Clurman.

"No, of course I couldn't prove it, Alma. But it amused me to think about it, and it amused Clurman to hear the theory."

They had shown Dave Leyton the object the next day. Dave was an associate professor at the University, and his subject was Science. He had chuckled when Tilletson told him the story, and offered to have the statue subjected to metallurgical analysis.

"We'll probably find out that it was made in Japan," he grinned. "But I'll be happy to have the laboratory look it over."

"How could they tell anything?" Alma said. "About its age, I mean, or where it came from?"

"You leave it to us. We'll put it under the metallurgical microscope, or give it what we call a 'macroscopic' examination. When we know what kind of metal it is exactly, it shouldn't be hard to figure out the rest. It's my guess that it's some kind of aluminum alloy, but we'll find out."

It was almost two weeks be-

fore he reported back to them, but when he did, he brought a short, red-faced man with him, who kept puffing out his cheeks and tugging at the collar of his shirt.

"This is Sam Schaffer," Dave said. "He's an old buddy of mine from the Kierman Metals Laboratory in Chicago. I tried to stop the damn fool from flying out here, but he insisted."

Tilletson looked at Sam Schaffer in bewilderment. "Is it about the statue?"

Schaffer had to sit down before he could talk, and when he did it was an explosive outburst.

"For God's sake, will you tell me where that thing *came* from? If it's a joke, Mr. Tilletson, I give up. I surrender! Now for the love of mike, tell me about it!"

"Tell you what?" Tilletson said. "It was sent to me by a friend, that's all I know."

Schaffer seemed close to tears.

"We couldn't scratch it, could not shave it, couldn't dent it. We couldn't do a damn thing to it, not even with diamond tools. It's the hardest metal I ever saw, Mr. Tilletson, unbelievably hard! I've got to know where it came from!"

"But I don't know," Tilletson whispered. "Unless . . ."

He looked at Dave, and then at Alma.

It was shortly after that when the expedition was conceived.

I WOKE up with a bad feeling on account of Ma had the misery the night before. I went into her room and she was still laying on the bed all sweaty and white-faced and looking big-eyed on account of the fever. I said we ought to fetch Doc Blaze and she said no, she'd be all right, she'd been taken bad like this before and it went away. She said I'd best be hurrying to the Werneke place and finish up the loading job old man Werneke wanted done, because we needed the money. So I went.

The sun was just peeking up over the hill and the air smelled like honey and pine. I took the old wagon trail and then cut across the big field to the Wernekes, hoping that Micah was already off to school. I didn't want no fussing with nobody that morning, I had too much sadness over Ma. But sure enough Micah was out by the pump, and he look up and grin when he see me coming and say, "Hey-oo! Look who's here. Here come ol' funny face, Pa!"

Old man Werneke clomped out onto the porch in his big boots, scratching and rubbing of himself. "I got a mess of wood needs movin', Jobo," he says. "Two, three truckloads, so you get right down to it, hear?"

I just kept shet and went to load up the logs in the big truck

parked outside the house. Old man Werneke owned a big parcel of timber and sold firewood to folks in the valley. I kept shet and went to work even though I knew Micah was trailing after me for reasons of mischief.

"Hey beanpole," he said. "If'n I had a face like yourn I'd hide my head in the ground. If'n I looked like you I'd go drown myself. Whyncha go drown yourself, Jobo?"

Micah's big sister Deborah come out on the porch brushing of her long silky hair and watched me. Folks didn't love me but they liked to see me work, lifting them big logs like they was little twigs and stacking them in the truck. I got hotter and hotter under my skin knowing that Deborah was watching me, and that made Micah meaner than ever. "Hey-oo! Look at that freak, Debbie, you ever see a dumb beanpole like that? Ain't good for nothin' but pickin' up logs, ain't that right, Jobo? You just a tall skinny horse, Jobo, only horses is better lookin'."

Deborah, she laughed, and the burning under my skin was something bad.

"They gonna put you in a cage some day, Jobo," Micah said. "Yeah, that's what they gonna do. Put you in a big cage like a animal and never let you out . . ."

Oh, Lord, it was hard to keep shet.

AFTER a while, Micah had to go off to school, and Deborah had her washing to do, and I finished my work in peace. I was done afore noon, and old man Werneke paid me my dollar and I went on home.

I was walking along the old county road when this car came chugging along behind me. Deke Crowley was driving and there was a stranger in the other seat. He was a big feller with short blond hair and shoulders like a mule, and he had a sweaty handkerchief tied around his neck. Deke honked that horn so loud I knew he wanted talking with me.

"Hey, Jobo!" Deke said. "Hey, you, Jobo! Hold up there a minute, huh?"

I grinned respectful and went up to the car. Deke was a-grinning, too, showing all his crooked teeth, and his face was red and hot like the whiskey in his gut was burning him up inside. The other feller wasn't grinning, he was looking at me like some snake he come across on the road.

"This is Jobo," Deke said, "This is the boy I been tellin' you about, Lou, strongest coot you ever saw in your life. Ain't I right, Jobo, ain't that the truth?"

I grinned and kept shet. The other feller grunted like a hog and said: "What are you, joshing me? This skinny freak?"

"Meet my buddy Lou," Deke

said, "my good old buddy from Nashville. Number one rassler in Tennessee, ain't that so, Lou? The strong boy of the South." That set him off laughing, and when Deke laughed he brayed like a jackass. The other feller cussed him, and then he climbed out of the car. He come over to me and look me up and down. He was big, not so tall as me, but maybe twice as wide. He look me up and down like a pine he was thinking of chopping down.

"He's a matchstick," Lou said, spitting on the ground. "He ain't got a muscle on him."

"Jobo don't need muscle, do you, boy? Jobo can out-lift you any day of the week, right, Jobo? You show him, boy, you shut his big mouth for him."

I grinned and didn't know what to do. The big feller he give me a dirty eye and then he walks over to the car. He spits in his hands and then he stoops down next to the rear bumper. He puts his hands under that bumper, and then he starts straining. I could see the big blue cord in his neck sticking out, and all the muscles under his shirt start getting big and bulgy, and that car come right off the ground, not more than a couple of inches, but right off the road.

"Whoo-*hee*!" Deke laughed. "How about that, Jobo? You ever see anything like that?"

I grinned and kept shet but that wasn't what they wanted me to do. The big feller come up to me and put his hand on my chest. "Go on, stringbean," he says, "go on and try it."

"Show him, boy!" Deke yelled. "I bet him five bucks you can outlift him, Jobo, you show him how!"

I SHOOK my head and started off down the road, but the big feller pulled me back and said: "You heard him! Go on, let's see what you can do!"

So I went over to the car and picked up the rear end so high that Deke went tumbling into the windshield and almost got knocked on the head, only he was so drunk he never would have felt it. The big feller's mouth opened so wide I could count his teeth and he just stood there on the road looking skeered like he'd seen a ghost. My ma warned me never to show off how strong I was, that folks wouldn't like it none, and I could see that Ma was right. That big feller, he sure didn't like it at all.

I went down that road again fast as I could walk, and I could hear Deke laughing all the time. I cut across the big field so they couldn't catch up to me again, on account of I didn't like that big feller, he was suffering from Pride and that's what Preacher Quilk calls the deadliest sin of all.

When I got home I heard Ma calling out to me from her room and I went running to see how she was. Her face looked like her blood had turned to snow and she was breathing so bad that I could hear the wind in her pipes. I got skeered and started to cry and she said to me,

"Don't cry, Jobo, don't cry so's you can hear me. I'm sick to dyin' now, and I got to tell you things."

"Don't die, Ma!" I said. "Please don't die!"

"Hush! You got to listen. When I'm gone you got to do something, Jobo. You got to go out Pa's grave back of the cabin, and you got to dig it up. There's a box buried on top of Pa's coffin, Job, and there's somethin' in that box he left for you. I never wanted to let you have it afore, Jobo, even though he wanted me to. I was afraid, Jobo, I was skeered of losing you. Lord, forgive me, I promised your Pa on his deathbed and I didn't keep my promise. You was supposed to see it when you was twenty-one . . ."

"See what, Ma?"

"I was skeered, Jobo, I was plain skeered. Of that thing, the *aku-aku* . . ."

I couldn't rightly tell who was talking, Ma or the fever, but I didn't care, all I wanted to do was run out and get Doc Blaze to help her. She put her burning hand on my wrist and kept on talking, but I didn't want to listen.

"Let me go, Ma," I cried, "please let me go. You ain't gonna die, Ma, Doc Blaze won't let you . . ."

She let me go at last, and I run out of that cabin fast as I could. I ran like the wind, quicker than any jackrabbit, sobbing and blubbering all the time my feet was flying over the road. *Ma! Ma!* I kept saying to myself, and thinking about the scrub pine where Pa was buried, and skeered that Ma would soon go there, too. I ran and I ran and I got almost sick when I saw Deke Crowley's old car again, coming down the road after me, with Deke like a crazy grinning man at the wheel.

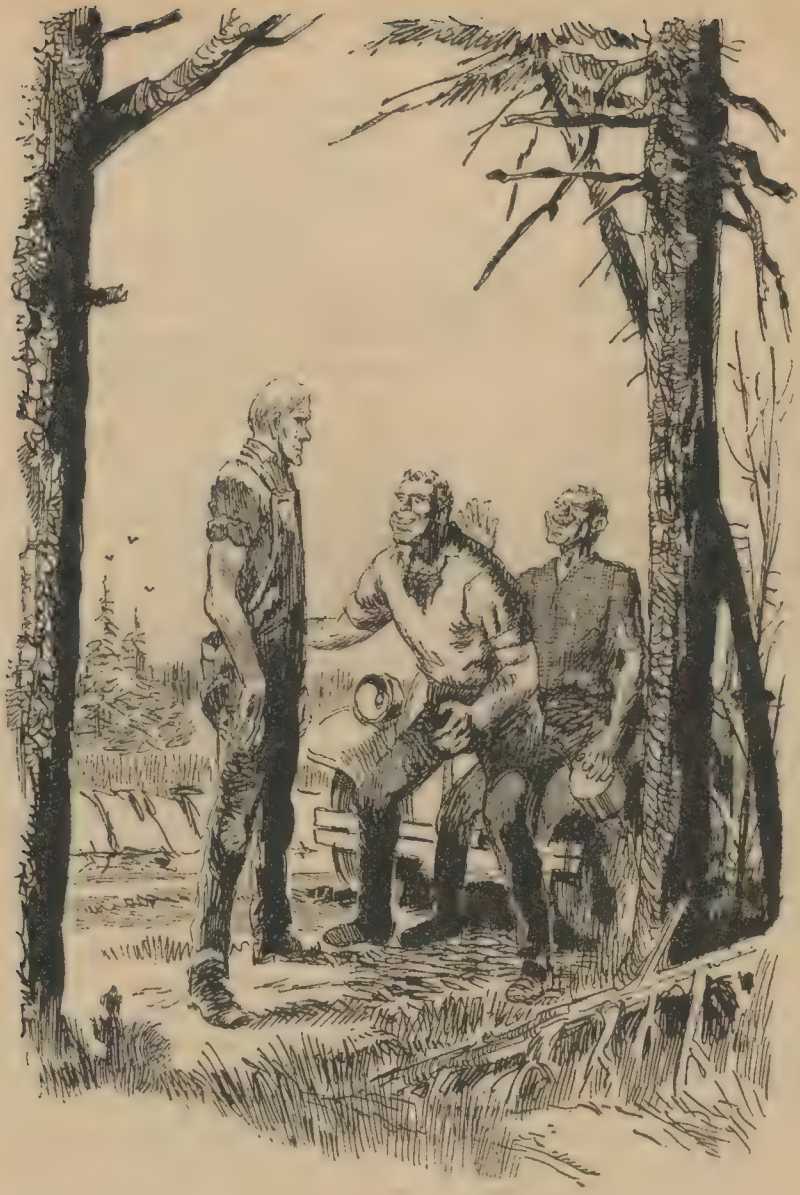
"Stop! Stop!" I heard Deke shout, beeping and honking of the horn. The wind rushed by my ears but I could still hear him shouting and beeping, and then I was crying so hard that my mouth couldn't swallow air no more and I had to stop.

Deke and the big feller come out of the car.

"Doc Blaze!" I said to them. "Please, Deke, it's Ma! It's Ma!"

"Go on," Deke laughed at the big feller, "you said you could take him, Lou, let's see you do it."

The big feller growled and walked up to me, his arms hanging at his sides. "Come on string-



bean," he said, walking all around me. "Let's see what you can do, you damn monkey."

"I got to get the Doc!" I said to them. "You got to help me, Deke, Ma's awful sick. Ma's dying!"

"Come on!" the big feller yelled. And then he jumped for me. His big arms went around my neck and he threw me on the ground, and then he shoved his knee in my stomach and put his elbow on my throat. Deke laughed and laughed and never-minded my crying. Now the big feller was laughing too, on account of he was glad he knocked me down, proud he could do it, and all of a sudden I couldn't hear Ma's voice anymore, that voice telling me about the Lord and about Job and about the patience I was supposed to have because I was different from other folks. I couldn't hear Ma's voice, and that made me think that maybe she was dead, so I took that big feller's arm in my two hands and I made juice out of it.

* * *

TILLETSON faced the ruins of the Anakena Valley, the colossal stone blocks that formed the terraces that fronted the open sea. He looked at the giant gods of Easter Island that had toppled from their lofty perches, a row of fallen idols, their rust-red topknots tumbled onto the plain.

He had done little more than observe since their first day on the island; the chills which had attacked him on the trawler had swiftly developed into a fever. For eight days, he had lain helpless in his tent while Dave Leyton and the others explored the terrain and questioned the natives for a clue to the mysterious metal god which had come into their hands. Tilletson was discouraged now, at the end of their second week, and even Dave's determined cheerfulness was beginning to disappear.

The natives of Easter Island had been more than cooperative; archeology was proving to be one of their major industries, and they had been willing to take Dave into their confidence and even into their secret caves, where their precious "family stones" revealed nothing concerning the metal statue which had inspired the journey. They had examined endless pieces of stone sculpture, objects whose expressive style had no counterpart in all Polynesia or even South America. They searched through pots and wood carvings and crumbling paper manuscripts for some connection between the metal god and the stone gods of Rapa Nui. The quest seemed hopeless.

Dave didn't seem to mind their failure; he was enjoying himself. Tilletson realized now how little faith Dave really had in the spacemen theory. He had joined the expedition for the pure fun of it, for the break in his scholastic routine, perhaps even as a way to improve his image as a potential son-in-law.

For Tilletson, however, the disappointment was a bitter one. Now he waited, not in hope of a major discovery, but in anticipation of the arrival of the Chilean warship that was due to anchor off Hangoroa Village.

Then, early on a Monday morning, the gray bulk of the ship was sighted, and he joined the natives of Easter in their happy trek to the shore. They were eager for the excitement and the formal ceremonies, but Tilletson was interested in only one thing: the mail bag the ship would deposit.

There were two letters for him, and the sight of the first made him cry out for joy. He had been unable to reach Professor Clurman after the arrival of the statue, but he had never stopped trying. Now, after months of waiting, Clurman had at last replied.

The letter read:

My old friend,

Forgive this long delay. I have been at sea for almost four months, and it was only today that I learned of your extraordinary mission to Easter Island. What you tell me about the statue I sent you fills me with astonishment. Surely you realize that the gift was only a jest, and that I never believed it might corroborate the silly theory you expounded. John, I know nothing of metallurgical science, but I cannot help suggest that your friends in the laboratory have made some error. Alien metal or not, however, the idea of a culture from some other planet is almost too incredible even for speculation, and I am distressed by the fact that I have in any way encouraged you to pursue this mad notion.

Nevertheless, you wished me to answer your questions regarding the statue; and here is all I can tell you. The native who sold me the object was named Pakar, and as I wrote you, he indeed claimed to have cut it out of the belly of a large fish. If you can locate this thief, you will find as I did that he cannot be trusted. However, I wish you luck.

Once again, I tender my regrets that you have been persuaded to make this journey on so flimsy a basis, and hope that you will forgive

Your friend,
Everett

When he had finished the let-

ter, Tilletson went as fast as his game leg would permit to Dave Leyton's tent. He showed him the letter, and asked if he knew of the native Clurman had described.

"Pakar," Dave said, rubbing his chin. "No, the name doesn't mean anything to me. But it's a lot more than we knew before."

"We've shown the statue to virtually everyone on the island, haven't we? Isn't it likely that this Pakar saw it, too?"

"If so, he didn't speak up. Maybe he was afraid to admit that he sold the thing to Clurman. Maybe he's afraid we want the money back."

Tilletson sat on Dave's bunk with a weary sigh. "Let's find this man, Dave. We've got to find him. We're not getting anywhere this way . . ."

"I'll find him," Dave said.

When Dave left the tent, Tilletson opened the second letter. It was from his daughter Alma. There was a clipping enclosed with it, but he read the letter first.

Dear Father,

I hope you've unraveled the entire Easter Island riddle by now, and that you've dug up the remnants of the spaceship that brought the gods to the island in the first place. In case you have not, please don't be concerned. I'm sure the trip itself has done you a world of good, and that you're basking in that delicious South Sea sunshine without a care in the world. Just to make you feel better, the temperature here has dropped about twenty degrees since you left, and the weathermen are talking about snow.

Now, just in case you think your daughter doesn't have her archeological wits about her, take a look at the attached clipping from Time *Magazine. When I first saw that poor man's photograph I reacted like a bullet on a hot stove, but perhaps I'm the only one in the world who sees the resemblance. Actually, the story that goes with it is rather sad. In any case, I thought you'd better see it right away and add it to your collection of data. In case you're having a hard time on Rapa Nui, I'll be happy to pay a visit to Nashville and see if I can learn anything more from Mr. Haley . . .*

Tilletson looked at the clipping.

Its heading was:

BACKWOODS SUPERMAN

Chief County lies buried in the hills of Tennessee and develops its own legends and heroes far from the skeptical eyes of more advanced communities. But one local legend was brought to public attention this week upon the

arrest of Job Haley, 24, a six-foot-six, 160-pound, red-headed farmboy whose unusual strength has long been a subject for local speculation.

Job Haley, called "Jobo" by the residents of Chief County, is reputed to have the strength of six men, and proved it to the misfortune of a Nashville strong man and sometime professional wrestler named Lou Dappler, 27. In an attack, which Dappler and his friend George "Deke" Mellum described as "unprovoked," the backwoods superman mangled the right arm of the wrestler so badly that amputation became necessary to prevent blood-poisoning. Note: Lou Dappler's fighting weight: 221 lbs.

The episode was given further tragic overtones when it was learned that "Jobo" Haley's widowed mother, Mrs. Martha Haley, had died at her home the same day.

The trial is scheduled for the end of the month, in Nashville.

Tilletson examined the photograph, the bewildered face, the eyes startled by the flashbulb glare. The caption beneath the picture was:

"Jobo" Haley:
Hercules of the Hills

It was the face of an Easter Island god.

THEY took me out of the place with all the iron doors and brought me to this room. It had carpets on the floor and chairs with leather cushions. The people in that room were smiling and that was a surprise, I thought I weren't never going to see a smiling face again. They sat me down real nice and the two men said hello to me real friendly. The two men were fat and one of them wore specs.

"So you're Jobo," that one said kindly. "You needn't be afraid of us, Jobo, we're here to help you. My name is Dr. Richmond, and this is my colleague, Dr. Ludlow." He looked at the other feller and dropped his voice. "You see what I meant, Carl? It's plainly a form of microcephaly. Definitely a limited cranial development, and according to what we've learned of his paternity, the trait is recessive."

"Perhaps," the other man said. "But then, the whole physiognomy is so unique . . . What did you learn from the Binet tests?"

"There haven't been any tests conducted as yet. I thought you and I might ask him some questions first."

My Ma would have called them fellers downright impolite, talking that way to each other while I was standing there.

"Well, Jobo," the first feller said, polishing his specs. "You

seem to have gotten yourself into a lot of trouble. Did you know what you were doing when you hurt that man's arm?"

"Yes, sir," I said.

"Did you mean to hurt him?"

"I was running to get Doc Blaze," I said, "and that feller was in the way of it. He jumped on me and wanted to rassle, and I didn't have the time for it."

"Are you sure that's how it happened, Jobo? The witnesses say you attacked first. Do you ever lie, Jobo?"

"No, sir, I never lie. The Lord wouldn't like that."

"Do you always do what the Lord wants you to?"

I had to tell the miserable truth.

"No, sir, I don't."

They looked at each other, and I knew I'd said a wrong thing.

"Jobo, do you remember anything about your father?"

"No, sir, he died when I was a babe."

"Do you have any family?"

"No, sir, I don't know of any kinfolks. Ain't nobody loves me now, on account of Ma's dead."

The first feller went to the desk and come back with a box full of wooden pieces. They was all different sizes and all round-shaped. The box was full of round-shaped holes.

"Do you like to play games, Jobo? Here's a little game we're going to play. You see this big round piece of wood? Can you tell me if it'll fit in this little round hole?"

"Yes, sir," I said.

The feller laughed and said, "Look again, Jobo, see how big this round piece is, and how small the hole is? Do you think you can make it fit, Jobo?"

"If you want me to," I said.

He handed me the box, smiling at his friend, and I took the big round piece and squeezed it small and stuck it in the hole. I thought that would pleasure them but it didn't, on account of the first feller's mouth went all sour and he looked at his friend and said: "Strong as an ox, of course, but definitely feeble-minded. Definitely."

They let me go back to the place with all the iron doors, and I went to sleep. I dreamed about Ma and the sweet hills and the sun coming up over the pine trees, and I dreamed about the animals and wished I could run in the woods like the deer and drink the cool running water in the brooks. When I woke up, I remembered what Ma had told me the day she died, and I wondered if I'd ever be able to dig up that box Pa left for me. I ain't never had no present before, and I sure would have liked to know what Pa had in that box.

A little while later they opened up my door again and said I

could come out to see a visitor. They took me to a different room this time, with a chicken-wire fence in it and chairs on both sides, and sitting across from me was the prettiest lady I ever saw, waiting to talk. Well, I went all hot under my skin when I see how pretty she was, on account of girls always made me feel funny, specially if they laughed at me the way they did, like Deborah Werneke.

I sat down on the other side of the fence while the lady looked at me, and I tried awful hard not to look back.

"Mr. Haley," she said quiet-like. "Mr. Haley, won't you talk to me?"

But I just kept shet.

"Please, Mr. Haley," she whispered. "Please, Jobo. Can I call you that? I went to a lot of trouble to get to see you, you have no idea how hard it was. I had to pretend to be your cousin, Jobo, your mother's niece."

"I don't know you," I said. "My Ma didn't have no kinfolk."

"I know that, Jobo. I made up that story because I wanted to see you. My name is Alma Tilletson, and I came all the way from Crawford, Illinois to talk to you. Do you know where Illinois is?"

"No, ma'am," I said.

"My father used to be a college professor there, but he's retired now. He heard about what happened to you, and he asked me to see if I could help. We knew you didn't have any relatives, Jobo, and we thought you might need some friends. Can I be your friend?"

"Why would you want to be?" I said.

"Listen to me, Jobo. You don't like staying in this place, do you? It's almost three weeks before your trial, and you don't have to stay here if you don't want to. Do you know what bail is?"

"No, ma'am."

"Well, it's a certain amount of money that has to be deposited, just to guarantee that you'll show up when the trial date comes. I'm going to put up that bail for you, Jobo, so you'll be able to leave this place until it's time to appear in court. Would you like that?"

"Yes, ma'am," I said, "I sure would like that. I sure would like to go home for a while."

"Home? You mean to Tennessee?"

"Yes, ma'am, just for a little while. There's something I got to do at the cabin."

"I see," the pretty lady said. "Well, you'll be able to do it now, Jobo, just as soon as I pay the bail. There's only one thing, Jobo. Would you let me come with you?"

I LOOKED at her real close, just to see where she was hiding of the laughter, only I could

not find it, not on her pretty mouth or in her nice blue eyes. She was looking at me a lot like Ma used to, full of kindness, and I aint never had no girl look at me like that before. It was like all the sadness went out of me at once, like a big black bird flying out of a cornfield.

The lady had her own car, and once they let me out of that place she said we would drive all the way back home to Chief County. It sure felt funny sitting in that seat next to her, the wind blowing her hair, making her look prettier than ever. We drove a long time, and we talked. She told me about her Pa who was far away, and about her Ma, who was dead, too, and that gave us something to sorrow about together. She was right curious about my folks, and I wish I could have answered her plainer.

"Was your father redheaded, too?" she said. "I don't think I ever saw such red hair as yours, Jobo. What color was your mother's hair?"

"I don't know about Pa," I said. "Ma's hair was the color of the midnight 'til she got gray."

"Did you go to school, Jobo?"

"Only 'til I was old enough to work the place, ma'am. There weren't nobody else around to work. Ma says that's why the Lord blessed me with such strength, on account of I had all the chores to do since I was a young'un. But Ma gave me some larning herself, out of the Bible mostly."

"Jobo—was your father born in Tennessee?"

"I don't know that, ma'am."

"Is it possible he came from—some other place? Did you ever hear your mother talking about it?"

"No, ma'am, I never did."

She looked right downcast about that, and I wished I could have answered different.

"Jobo, have you ever heard of a place called Easter Island? Or Rapa Nui?"

"No," I said. "I can't say as I did. I'm awful sorry, ma'am."

"Never mind,' she said. "It's not important, Jobo."

All the sadness come back to me when I saw the old cabin again. The grass was all growed up high and tangled and the fence needed mending. There was busted windows in the front, and all the chickens had been stolen by folks or chicken-hawks. I tried not to let the tears come when I went inside, for the sake of Alma, but it was hard when I saw how empty the rooms was.

"What is it that you have to do here, Jobo?"

"I got to dig up something, ma'am. Out in back." I went to the shed and got me a shovel. "It's my Pa's grave," I said.

"You're not going to dig up your father's grave?"

"My Ma said I should, she said there was something on top of the coffin, something Pa left for me when he died."

I TOOK the shovel and went out to the scrub pine. Nothing marked Pa's grave but I knew where it was. The ground was hard with frost, but I was strong. The dirt flew off that shovel until I had a hole almost big enough to climb inside.

I looked at the lady and she had eyes like a skeered doe. But I went on digging until I found the box.

It were made out of something like silver, only not so shiny. Alma give out a funny little sound when she saw the box, and put out her hand to touch it.

"That metal," she said. "I've seen it before . . ."

I opened the lid and looked inside. There was nothing in the box except a round shiny thing with writing on it. I mean it looked like writing, but it wasn't no words I ever learned. I looked and I looked and I couldn't stop the looking at it. I forgot where I was all of a sudden, I was looking at it so hard, I couldn't see the trees or the grass or the sunshine or the pretty girl who was standing near. I just looked at that thing my Pa gave me and I felt like I was falling right into it, like I was going to drown in a lake of silver . . .

The tent flap opened, and the incision of light made Tilletson blink.

Dave Leyton said: "Well, we've got your Pakar for you. It's no wonder we didn't locate him before, he's been a prisoner in the village stockade."

Tilletson followed the younger man outside, his heart pounding. The native who waited sheepishly, flanked by two members of the trawler's crew, was a short, bronzed man with a scraggly black moustache. The shirt he wore carried the insignia of the U.S. Navy, his cap bore the name of the Chilean warship, and the rest of his attire seemed to have been gathered from other island visitors.

"Clurman was right," Dave grinned. "He's a bandit, and a professional one. He makes his living by stealing."

"I don't care about that," Tilletson said. "All I'm interested in is the statue. Does he speak English?"

Pakar swept the cap off his head and said: "Yes, Senor, I speak English. I have done nothing wrong, the charges against me were false. I have many enemies on the island—"

"That's all right, Pakar, we're not here to make any trouble for you. Dave, get the statue out of my gear." As Dave entered the tent, Tilletson said: "Pakar, do you remember a man named

Clurman, a professor? He was an old man with a short white beard, visited the island last year? He claims you sold him a statue, do you remember that?"

Pakar shrugged. "I have many business transactions, Senor. You understand." He looked up guiltily as Dave reappeared with the statue in his hand. "Well, perhaps I do," Pakar said. "Yes, I seem to remember him."

"And this?" Dave said, holding up the object. "Do you remember selling him this?"

"The price was fair," Pakar said stubbornly. "The sacred things of our forefathers have great value, Senor. And a man must live . . ."

"We're not complaining," Tilletson said. "All we want to know is where you found it, Pakar, how you came by it."

"I cannot remember that, Senor."

Tilletson openly fingered a twenty-dollar bill. "We're willing to pay for your help, Pakar."

The islander swallowed, and said:

"It is from the cave of Hotu Matua himself, Senor, our first ancestor. I am the only one on Rapa Nui who knows where the cave is, and I have been entrusted with the secret by my *aku-aku* . . ."

"Your personal spirit told you where the cave is?"

"Yes, Senor, but do not ask me to reveal it. This cave holds much *mana*, Senor, much magic. The other sacred things of our ancestors are all of stone and wood, but the things of Hotu Matua himself are things of silver."

"You're lying," Dave said. "Don't believe him, John, there's not a cave on Easter that hasn't been thoroughly explored by now."

"My friend speaks truly," Tilletson said harshly. "You needn't lie to us, Pakar, we will pay you only for the truth. You told this Professor Clurman that you removed the statue from the belly of a giant fish."

"No," Pakar squirmed, "that was a lie, but this is the truth. I heard the story from the missionary, about the great *kanaka* Jonah . . . But I speak the truth now, Senor, the statue comes from the cave of Hotu Matua. No one but I has seen this cave, this I swear to you."

"And are there other such things in the cave of Hotu Matua? Things of metal?"

"Yes, Senor. But my *aku-aku* is a jealous spirit and guards the cave against all but me. I cannot take you there, Senor."

"Don't waste your time," Dave said. "There's no such place, John."

"What would it take," Tilletson said, "to convince you to show us this cave, Pakar?"

"But it cannot be, Senor!"

"If it really exists, if you're not lying, I'll pay you one hundred American dollars. And if I find any other metal object in this cave, an object like this one, I will pay you another hundred."

Pakar was licking his lips. Then he put his hand on Tilletson's arm and drew him away from the others.

"Senior, listen," he said. "I can see you are an honest person, and have strong *mana* yourself. But you must understand that there are certain things, personal possessions in the cave, the results of my transactions . . ."

Tilletson smiled, with the sudden realization of what made the cave so precious to Pakar: it was the place that held his cache of stolen goods.

"You needn't worry, Pakar. Show me to this place, and I will protect your secret."

"And the money?"

"The money will be paid."

* * *

ONCE, the entire population of Easter Island had been cave-dwellers, fearing some unknown terror in the sky or sea. Their hiding places still remained, some no larger than stone closets, others long narrow tunnels, some as deep as wells. Many of the caves were open to view, but others had been concealed by stones or lava blocks; in all of them, the shafts were narrow and smooth. Pakar's cave was located within sight of the old stone quarry of Rano Raraku, and Tilletson had to admit that its entrance was remarkably well camouflaged. The lava blocks that hid it from curious eyes had been skillfully cut to make the entrance virtually invisible.

Pakar squeezed through the narrow opening first, after making certain they were unobserved; then he helped Tilletson through. It was a tighter squeeze for the old man, who ran to stoutness, but once inside, the flashlight Pakar carried revealed that his secret cave was larger than most of the caverns on the island. The sight of a pickaxe on the floor indicated to Tilletson that Pakar had been enlarging it himself over the years, probably as his horde of stolen goods increased. It was obvious why his *aku-aku* had wisely advised him to discourage visitors. There were stacks of articles in every corner, military-issue clothing, wrist watches, shoes, canned foods, and unaccountably, a pair of candelabra, a ladies purse, and a piano-shaped music box. The latter seemed to be his pride and joy; he wound it for Tilletson and forced him to listen to The Blue Danube, the tinny notes echoing strangely in the rocky cave. But Tilletson wasn't interested in music.

"All right, Pakar," he said, "so you have a fine cave. But you must yet prove to me that it was the dwelling place of Hotu Matua."

The thief grinned, and nodded his head. Then he pushed aside a pile of Navy blankets against one wall, and began to work diligently at removing a smoothly-fitted block. It slid neatly out from the cave wall, and left an entrance just large enough for them to crawl through. Tilletson went first, and found himself in a smaller stone chamber, but one far more exciting to an archeologist than Pakar's warehouse of stolen merchandise.

The auxiliary room was crammed with cave stones, smoothly-cut pieces in the shapes of mythical beasts, the heads of gods and women, even the stone image of a three-masted reed boat, in which the first men of Rapa Nui were supposed to have journeyed to the island.

But Tilletson had seen these cave stones before. What he hadn't seen was the bright, silvery disc which lay in the stone lap of a small seated idol. The object drew him like a star; he put the flashlight beam on its brilliant surface and blinked in wonder at it, trying to decipher the strange ideogram carved on its surface. He was certain it held the key to his theory.

The excitement was making his heart beat too rapidly. Suddenly, he found it hard to breathe in the confines of the small stone chamber. He started to call out to Pakar, but found he lacked even the breath for that. He dropped to his knees and crawled into the larger room of Pakar's cave, panting, clutching the silvery disc. Then he seemed to be swallowed by darkness . . .

WHEN he opened his eyes, it was Dave Leyton's face he saw, and its jaw was fixed in determination.

"This does it for me," Dave was saying. "You're just not well enough for this kind of thing, John. We should have known that from the start."

Tilletson sat up with a groan. "Pakar . . ." he said.

He heard jabbering outside the tent, and Dave said: "Pakar dragged you here from that damned cave of his, after you passed out. Now he's claiming you owe him two hundred dollars. Is that true?"

"The disc—did you find it?"

"You mean this thing?"

"Dave, it means something! I'm sure it does!"

The younger man turned the shining object in his hand with something like disdain.

"It's only a hunk of metal with some scribbling on it; I think it's South American, maybe a Peruvian lucky piece. If this is all we

could dig up after coming ten thousand miles . . . Look, John, let's face the facts. It's all a waste of time. I hate to say it, but the theory's a washout . . ."

"Yes," Tilletson said soberly. "You're right of course. We might as well go home, Dave. It's the only sensible thing to do."

* * *

FOR the first time in my life I was sick, and yet it was a joy like none I ever knowed. It was as if the Lord struck me down on purpose with that funny piece of silver, just so's I could taste the sweetness of His tender mercy. I once heard Preacher Quilk talk of angels, and maybe that's what Alma was, an angel come to earth to show me the gentle ways of Heaven.

I don't know what it was that made the strangeness hit me. I looked at the thing my Pa left me, and the next thing I knowed I was back in the cabin, weak and helpless as newborn kitten, with Alma taking care of me. I could hardly raise my head, and she had to spoonfeed me like a babe. My own Ma never showed me so much kindness, and yet it was different from the way Ma cared for me, different in a way that made me happier than ever in my life.

It must have been a week afore I could raise up on my own two legs and walk around. Alma never left me hardly for a minute, excepting to drive into Chief Corners for groceries. She brought old Doc Blaze to see me, too, but the Doc just thumped me and peeked down my throat and said I was in need of a tonic. I took that tonic regular, but I knowed that wasn't what put me on my feet at last, it was Alma's kindness.

We talked a lot, Alma and me, and I told her everything that was in my heart since I was a youngun. She was a whole lot smarter than me, of course, with plenty of schooling packed into her pretty head, but she never made me ashamed of my dumbness.

Alma said nary a word about what happened the time I was unconscious, not until I was all better and we were getting ready to head back to Nashville and the trial. Then she said:

"Jobo, there's something I have to tell you. When you were unconscious . . ." She stopped, and looked at me queer.

"Was I troublesome, Alma?"

"You were talking, Jobo. I thought it was only a delirium, at first. But you were talking . . . differently."

"I was?"

"Yes." She put her soft hands in mine. "It was your own voice, but you were saying things that didn't sound like you. Do you remember any of it at all?"

"No, Alma, I reckon I don't."

"It's all tied up with that disc you found in your father's grave. The moment you looked at it, you keeled over. Then as soon as I'd gotten you into the cabin you started talking . . ." She gave me a big smile, like she didn't want me worrying. "Well, never mind about that now. We'd better get started for Nashville, Jobo. We'll get this trial thing out of the way, and then . . ."

"And then they put me in a cage," I said. "Just like Micah Werneke used to tell me. Ain't that right, Alma?"

"No! Jobo, you can't even think that! They'll know you didn't start that fight, it'll be obvious to everyone!"

"You don't know the way folks is, Alma. You got to be a freak like me afore you can learn how mean folks can be."

"Jobo," she said, looking at me steady. "Everything will be all right. Do you understand?"

I smiled at her, and I kept shet.

I was feeling more like my old self when we headed back for Nashville. But the closer we got the less Alma felt like talking, and the longer her pretty face got. By the time we got to the city limits, it was almost like she was ready to bust out crying.

LORD, I never seen nothing like that trial, and I never want to again. Back home there was always plenty of staring eyes on me, making me feel like a worm crawled out of its hole, but I never had so many eyes on me at once. That courtroom was plum filled up with people, all gawking and giggling and carrying on about me. Even the judge he stared at me funny, like he couldn't get used to the sight of me.

They give me a lawyer to speak for me, but he acted downright embarrassed about being there. Afore the trial I talked to him about what happened on the county road, but he didn't look much interested. And when Deke Crowley got on that stand, nothing my lawyer said made him change his story.

"No, sir," he said, stubborn as a mule. "We didn't do nothin' wrong. Me and my friend were just driving along peaceful when this Jobo jump out in front of the car and makes us stop. I could see he was spoilin' for a fight, he was always proud of how strong he was. Them that's weak in the head, you know, they can be awful strong . . ."

I could hear the folks all buzzing behind me, and I looked into the crowd to find Alma.

"Anyway, we stop the car, and when Jobo sees I got Lou Dappler with me, chempeen rassler of the county, he gets real ornery. He says, you ain't so allfired strong, Lou Dappler, I could take

you any day of the week. Well, my buddy Lou, he's real peaceable outside the ring, Judge, he don't go lookin' for trouble. He sort of laughs and says thankee kindly, but not today. Well, this Jobo gets real mad when he hears that, and all of a sudden he flings himself on Lou afore the poor feller knows what's happening. Oh, Jobo wouldn't have got the better of him if he wasn't surprised, Lou woulda broken him in half. But the next thing I see, he's got holt of Lou's arm and squeezes it to a bloody pulp . . ."

Deke give a shudder, and an old lady in the court went "Tsk! Tsk! The monster!"

THEN they put Lou Dappler on the stand. He was a right nice-looking feller, well set-up and handsome in his Sunday suit. He looked real sad and pitiful with that right sleeve pinned up.

"Yes, sir," he said. "I wasn't aimin' to pick no fight with that feller. You see, I'm a professional rassler, and us professionals know better'n that. We could lose our license, gettin' into scraps with amatoors. But you know how it is, when you get a name for yourself in this business, there's always somebody around wants to prove he's the better man . . ."

I could see the way things were going for me just with one look at the jury. And I knew that Micah was right, that's what I was heading for, a cage. Maybe I been heading for it all my life.

All of a sudden I felt like the room was spinning. I felt like the courtroom was turned upside down and the folks in its was spilling out over me. The blood went rushing to my head so fast that I couldn't see straight, and the patience got drove clean out of me. Afore I knew what I was doing I was on my feet, my arm stuck out towards the witness stand, my finger pointing at that man's face.

"LOU DAPPLER!" I was saying, in a voice I never heard before. "DAPPLER, TELL THE TRUTH!"

I reckon folks was too shocked to do anything about me. Even the Judge didn't move a hair. But it wouldn't have made no difference, cause nobody could stop me now.

"THE TRUTH!" I said, in a voice that boomed out like thunder rolling over the hills.

The rassler stood up, and I could see the sweat spring out on his face and start rolling down his cheeks. He looked at me, and then he looked at the Judge, and then he said:

"I'm lying, Judge. I'm lying. It was me that made him fight, Deke Crowley put me up to it. Deke said Jobo could lick me, so I jumped him. It was all my

fault, Judge, I swear it was . . ."

I don't even remember sitting down. All I remember was thanking the Lord for taking my side.

* * *

TILLETSON found his homecoming a strange one. He had suffered so much in the past month that he had been looking forward to Alma's solicitousness almost as a hurt child looks forward to a mother's comfort. But he found his daughter in a mood that was oddly detached, strangely exhilerated by some emotion or event that had nothing to do with him. He tried to conceal his disappointment, and then tried to learn the reason.

Alma sat near him on the sofa, and held his hand while she told him the story.

"I just couldn't resist it," she said. "I felt practically compelled to go and see that man, Father, the one whose picture I saw in *Time*. The resemblance was so uncanny, especially to the statue, I just felt there *had* to be a connection. I had no idea what he'd be like, and I was surprised. He was so sweet and shy, so different from other people that he couldn't really understand his own nature. He wasn't really as ugly as those Easter Island things, even if the resemblance was there. There was even something attractive about him . . ."

"For heavens sake!" Tilletson exploded. "Alma, why did you do such a crazy thing? Getting mixed up with some backwoods idiot?"

"He's not an idiot, father, I can tell you that. He may even be . . . Oh, I don't know what he really is, Father. All I know is that he's—the most exciting person I've ever met."

"Exciting? That gargoyle?"

Her hand grew cold in his, and Tilletson knew he had offended her.

"I'm sorry," he said. "I didn't mean that, Alma. I've been under a strain. . . ."

"Listen to me, Father, please. Listen to the whole story, and then tell me what you think."

She told him the story. She told him of Jobo and his hard life in the hills of Tennessee, of his astonishing strength and the trouble it had brought him. She told him of the trial, and of its surprising outcome. She talked of the death of Jobo's mother, and his father's peculiar bequest.

"That was all it was, just a small silvery disc, with some sort of writing on it. But when Jobo looked at the disc, the most amazing thing happened. He became unconscious, just as if he had been hit with a sledge-hammer. And then—"

Tilletson was staring at her, the color gone from his face.

"This disc," he said. "Did you see it, Alma? Do you know where it is?"

"Yes, Jobo has it. He keeps it with him all the time, but he can't look at it. He's afraid to look at it again."

"I have to see it, Alma!"

She released his hand, and stood up.

"Then you'll have to see Jobo, too, father. He's here, in the house. I brought him home with me."

"You brought him *here?*"

"Yes, father."

THE sight of Jobo's long body descending the stairway in his own home unnerved Tilletson. Not because the figure was frightening; there was a sweetness in Jobo's expression, a calm in his eyes, that quieted all fears. And Alma had been correct: he wasn't as grotesque as the stone idols of Easter Island. His eyes were large and expressive, almost handsome. His flaming red hair curled about his long head in leonine fashion, and his complexion was that of a boy's.

Yet Tilletson was unnerved, because he was watching Pakar's statue come to life.

"Jobo," Alma said, "this is my father, Mr. Tilletson."

He didn't seem to know how to reply. He shuffled his feet, and lowered his head as if anxious to underplay his height.

"Sit down," Tilletson said hoarsely. "I want to ask you something, Jobo, something important."

Jobo sat down. He glanced at Alma, who put her hand on his shoulder.

Tilletson said:

"I've just returned from a long journey, Jobo, to an island far away in the South Seas. I found something strange on this island, a metal disc with peculiar markings on it, a bright thing that looks like silver."

Jobo blinked at him.

"My daughter has told me that your father left you something like that, as a gift."

"Yes, sir," Jobo said shyly. "He left me a round shiny thing, too, but I don't know what it's for. It hurt me to look at it."

Tilletson removed his wallet from his pocket.

"I brought that disc with me, Jobo. I've been carrying it around ever since my return from Easter Island. Will you look at it?"

Again, Jobo looked towards Alma, and Tilletson's daughter smiled reassurance.

"Yes, sir," Jobo said. "If you want me to."

Tilletson took the object from his wallet, and passed it to Jobo.

Jobo looked at it, shuddered throughout the length of his long frame, and slipped into unconsciousness.

It was almost an hour before his eyes opened again. But now the eyes of Jobo were strangely different. There had been a loss of innocence, and a gain of wisdom mingled with sadness. And when he spoke, the voice of Jobo was different, too.

"Please don't be worried," he said. "The effect of the *aku-aku* is powerful at first, but then it can be withstood. The first time I saw the disc was too much for my mind, it couldn't support the shock. But now . . ."

"Jobo!" Alma gasped. "Jobo, what's happened to you?"

"Don't be alarmed, Alma," Jobo said. "It's nothing to be frightened of. The disc has released a power in me, a power that has been mine from the beginning of my life. It's effect might be described as post-hypnotic." He smiled. "I've come into my inheritance, Alma. The *aku-aku* has done this."

Tilletson was trembling. *"Aku-aku!* You mean this thing—" He stared at the disc still clutched in Jobo's hand.

"No, Mr. Tilletson, not an *aku-aku* in the mystic sense, there is no magic spirit in the disc. It might have been anything which my ancestors chose to invest with post-hypnotic power. They chose this disc because it was a sacred emblem on our world."

"Your world," Alma murmured. "Jobo, I can't believe this. You were born here, on Earth, in Tennessee . . ."

"Yes, Alma, I was born here. As my father was born here, and his father before him. But were you to trace my ancestral history to its earliest beginnings, you would find your search ending millions of miles from Earth, on a planet we called Ak-Lia, and which as yet has no name in your astronomy."

"Who are you?" Tilletson said. "For God's sake, who are you?"

"I am Jobo. I am the child of my father, who had the name of Seth, and the grandchild of his father, who bore the name of Ephraim. We have lived among the people of Earth not as aliens but as humans. We have loved and married and given birth here, for this was now our home and we wished to be part of it. We have never wanted to be different, only to live and work and find happiness on our adopted planet.

YET we are different, there is no denying that. We have tried to hide our differences, to become accepted on your terms. But when a child of Ak-Lia is born, it is born different. It enters life, not with the *tabula rasa* of the Earth child, not as an empty vessel waiting to be filled by experience, not devoid of almost all racial memory . . . A

child of Ak-Lia is born with an inheritance of Memory, a Memory that dates back countless generations. All that has happened to our race, has happened in the Memory of the child of Ak-Lia. All that is known to our race is known to that child. Each of us is a living record of our History."

"It's incredible!" Tilletson said. "You mean you remember *everything?* All your father knew, your grandfather, your—"

"In the last stage of our evolution, this gift was given to our people, this continuity of Memory. It was a gift from God, perhaps as compensation for taking so much away from us. For ours was a dying race, Mr. Tilletson. The flight from Ak-Lia to Earth so many centuries ago was a flight of desperation, not of adventure. Our women had become barren, and our people were threatened with extinction from forces beyond our control. In the last agonies of our race, this power was given to us. It was as if God had wished to make amends, by willing that if only one Ak-Lian lived, the soul of our race would live, too."

"And are there—others on Earth?"

"No," Jobo said gravely. "I am the last of my people. If I had never seen the *aku-aku,* if I had not been awakened to my inheritance, the soul and sacred memory of my people would have vanished from the universe."

"And you didn't know?" Alma whispered. "When you were a boy, growing up in the hills . . ."

"No, Alma, I knew nothing of my destiny. In the Ak-Lian laws, our children are awakened to racial memories only after they have attained manhood, when they are ready to accept the responsibility of this inheritance. When we are children, our minds are clouded so that we can grow to maturity as true children of Earth, learning the ways of its people, suffering its wrongs. When we are men, the *aku-aku* is presented to us, the trigger which releases the force of Memory. My mother was to give me that privilege when I reached the age of twenty-one. But she delayed the moment, almost until it was too late. She was afraid that I would no longer be her son once it happened, that I would be something alien and different." Jobo smiled sadly. "She was wrong, of course. I would still have been her son, her Jobo . . ."

"It's a hoax," Tilletson said, rising from the chair. "Don't listen to him, Alma, don't believe him—"

"Please," Jobo said. "What I tell you is the truth. I am the inheritor of the Mind of Ak-Lia, but I am Earthborn. When the time came for us to flee our planet, we searched the universe for

a world and a race compatible to our own, where we could live in peace, where we could propogate . . . My physical body is much like yours, with heart and lungs and organs and genes like yours. I have more strength in my muscles, my skin is tougher, but we are the same. We are the first cousins of Earth, members of the same evolutionary family—"

"Jobo!" Alma looked at him with shining eyes. "Jobo, it is really true? Are you the only one left?"

"There has only been one, Alma. Ever since the tragedy which struck us, on the island you call Easter."

WE had come millions of miles. We had worked for a thousand years to make the journey possible. Our science was advanced, and all our scientific effort was concentrated on just one purpose. To find another world for our people before the death of our race, to locate that world in the magnitude of the universe which could offer us a home and a future. Our astronomers found that world at last, and our technicians built the vessel which would take us there.

"There were forty of us on that voyage.

"When we entered the gravitational field of Earth, the unexpected occurred. An atomic reactor exploded for a reason we never determined. Our ship crashed into a great ocean. Half of our number were killed. Those who survived the impact of the crash made their way to a tiny dot of land in that vast water, an island peopled by savages who greeted us, understandably, with cries of terror and spearheads of stone. A few of us, despite our tough hides, were killed. We slew no Earthman in return, for it is forbidden in our faith to take the life of any living thing.

"It was then that we discovered the only weapon which would save us from total destruction. We learned that we had a power over these aborigines which was greater than stones or spears. We could *command* them to do as we wished.

"I cannot explain the mental force or the evolutionary quirk which made such a thing possible; perhaps it is all related to our powers of Memory continuity. But even now, Mr. Tilletson, I could command you to do anything at all, and you would be powerless not to obey.

"When we discovered this power we had over the Earth people, we used it as wisely as our intelligence would permit. We commanded them to lay down their arms, commanded them to live with us in peace. As a reward for this enforced acceptance, we did what we could to help them. We taught them how

to use the meager resources of their little island, to use tools, to carve houses out of stone, and ships out of wood. At the same time, we attempted to salvage the wreckage of our ship.

"We lived among these people for many Earth years, hoping to be accepted, hoping that on this small island we would find the way to keep our race alive.

"Now I must tell you something shocking. When we learned that true acceptance would never come, that our alien faces and bodies were too repulsive to the women of Rapa Nui, we were forced to do something you will think abhorent.

"We commanded love.

"It was the only answer. We mated with the women of the island, and they gave birth to our children. But as if in punishment by God, the children that were born to us were children of Earth, and not of Ak-Lia, inheritors not of our destiny, but of Earth's. They were born without our strength, or our powers of Mind.

WE are a religious people. When we saw the result of our action, when we recognized the injustice we had perpetrated and the retribution which followed, the Ak-Lians took a solemn oath, never to use their powers to command Earthmen again.

"I broke that commandment, Alma, in the courtroom in Nashville.

"But still, God wasn't satisfied with our act of contrition. There was even greater retribution to come. Suddenly, a great plague swept the island, killing AK-Lians and Earth people alike. Once again, we were forced to seek escape, and this time it was by sea. Ships were built, and a handful of our people and islanders struck out to seek shelter from the deadly touch of the infection . . . Only one vessel survived that journey, and only one passenger remained alive, the others dead of either plague or exposure. The ship came to ground on the continent of South America, and it was there he began his pilgrimage.

"His name was Ak-Mira, and he was my ancestor. He accomplished something that no member of our race had accomplished before. He found a woman who loved him, in the wilds of Ecuador. And when their child was born, it was an Ak-Lian, in body and in mind.

"I will not recount for you the generations which followed. Each child was a male, and each child was forced to seek his own destiny. The sufferings of my forebears were great, for they sought to hide from the eyes of men, in places where the world would trouble them least. Two genera-

tions ago, my forefathers settled in the peaceful hills of Tennessee.

"So you see, each generation survived only through love, as I have survived. Through the love my mother gave my father, that gentle, freakish man whose strange appearance didn't prevent the birth of love in her heart. . . .

"Yes, I am the only one left. And perhaps I will be last in all our history."

Jobo stood up slowly, and went back to the stairway. Alma rose, too, with tears in her eyes. She looked at her father sitting upright on the sofa, and then followed Jobo to the stairs.

She put her hand on his arm, and said:

"Jobo! Jobo, I love you!"

* * *

The sun loves these hills, and bathes them morning and night in such glory that Heaven itself must be envious. I will miss these hills, these sunrises and sunsets, but I have seen my alloted number, and it is time for me to sleep.

Now I can hear the laughing voices of Alma and Jeremiah out in the back yard. When a man is dying the sound of laughter is the saddest of all sounds. Of course, she doesn't know the truth as yet, this is a private knowledge of oncoming death with which my people are blessed —or cursed. No, not cursed, because I feel no regret. My hair is white and the peace of age is in my heart. The sadness I feel is for the sadness Alma will know when I am gone. But that, too, will pass, and she will have the comfort of Jeremiah.

Jeremiah. Now the time has come for his *aku-aku*, for Jeremiah is a man, and deserving of his inheritance. I wonder what he will make of it? God grant that he is as fortunate as I have been.

Hurry, Alma, come inside, the wings of darkness hover close, and I must see my son. I must awaken within him the memory of our ancient race and homeland. Lord, I thank you for granting this boon, so that I, Jobo, can live forever.

THE END

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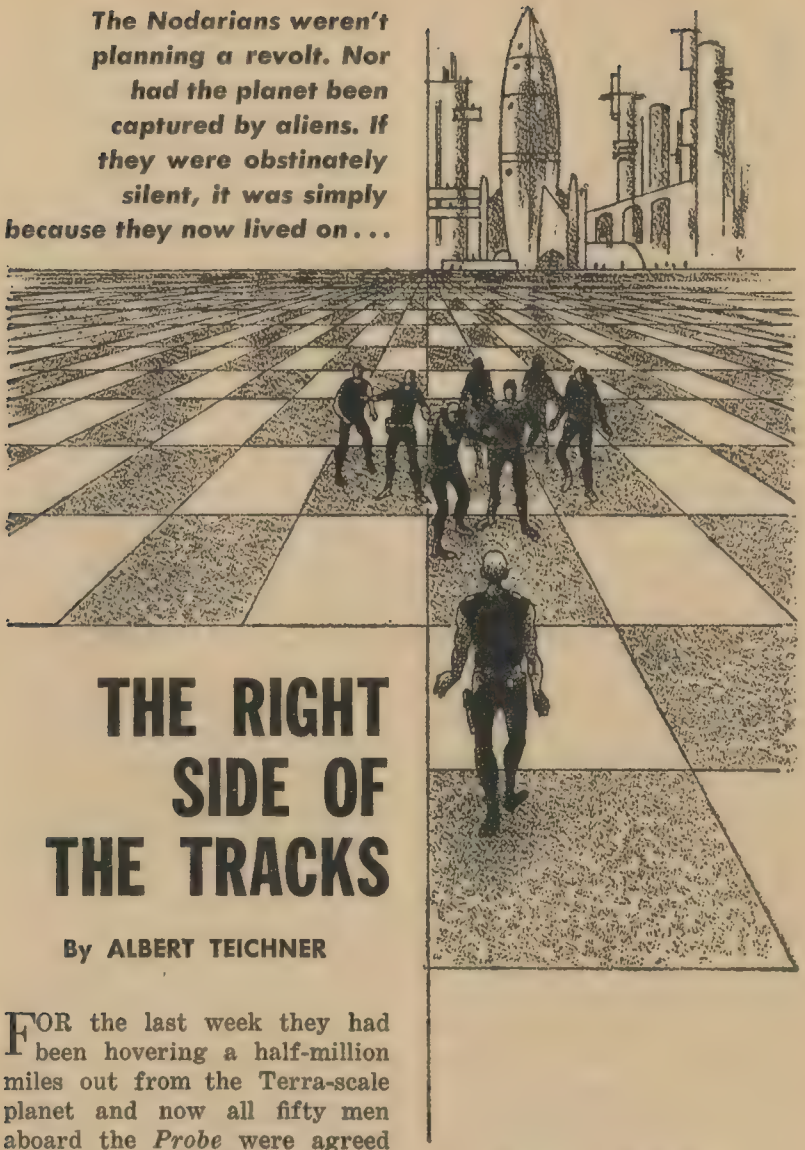
The Nodarians weren't planning a revolt. Nor had the planet been captured by aliens. If they were obstinately silent, it was simply because they now lived on . . .



THE RIGHT SIDE OF THE TRACKS

By ALBERT TEICHNER

FOR the last week they had been hovering a half-million miles out from the Terra-scale planet and now all fifty men aboard the *Probe* were agreed that it was time to land and in-

Illustrated by SCHELLING

vestigate the place at closer hand. Even Dr. Stern, the perennial pessimist, felt the inhabitants still looked human through the electroscope. While hopelessly blurred by such distance magnification, these two-legged, two-armed beings showed nothing dangerously different from men on any other member planet of the Galactic Glia.

But why did these seeming fellow creatures want to be by themselves in total isolation?

Every schoolboy knows that each of the ten thousand human planets signals all the others once each galactic hour—even if there is no information to exchange except the carrier signal itself. Just as each neuron in a brain maintains some electrical contact with every other. From this infinite openness of pathways, the schoolboy will explain to you, comes the adaptability of both the individual mind and human civilization in general, the ability to concentrate everything on whatever problem is at hand.

Yet here was Nodar refusing to answer the universal signals for years at a time. There was something menacing about this non-conformity and Supreme Council had carefully considered all possibilities before dispatching the *Probe*. These had boiled down to a painful set of alternatives: either an alien species, commencing the building of an empire, had seized the planet; *or* the Nodarians, turned primitive for some unknown reason, were hiding behind the wall of silence to mount their own attack on the rest of the human universe.

"Alien seizure, my foot!" Commander Linder told the rest of the crew now. "Those are men down there, men working up some anti-social mischief we truly civilized people can't even imagine."

"Mischief? We just don't know that it is," Stern sighed through his grey, brush mustache. "Do we, Commander?"

"It can't be anything good," Linder snapped. The other officers nodded their agreement.

"Suppose they've become indifferent," Stern persisted, "and just want to be left by themselves?"

Linder gave a sour laugh as he moved down the catwalk, throwing one communication circuit after another to ON position. "I imagine they're going to play very coy before we wangle an answer out of them—but not because they're indifferent, Stern. It's impossible for people to be indifferent to their fellows—cooperation or hate, those are the two possibilities, and Nodar alone refuses to cooperate. *Why* should they be indifferent? *What* could they have to develop beside the universe of people around them?"

"I don't know," Stern conceded. "I don't even think my explanation's the likely one—yours is—but we do have to consider everything."

"In—dif—fe—rent," Linder repeated, provoking laughter from his crew. He whirled his bulky frame around with the usual surprising ease and snapped a receiving screen on. "Look at it again, look at what we've been picking up from them the last six days. I think they've known we're up here all along—deliberately pulling wool over our eyes."

TO the tune of running squeaks and rumbles unshaped colors flowed across the screen mixed with equally shapeless flickers of black and white. "Certainly looks deliberate," said young Crawford who was Linder's second in command but not ordinarily one of the yesman chorus. "Doctor, as our Chief Semanticist, do you get any message at all out of that stuff?"

"No," he conceded again.

"The lack of a message," said the Commander, "there's your only message. A slap in our faces and a kick in our teeth!" His jaw tightened. "Even if it means our finish, we've got to go down there and find out what we can. Council will be receiving all our information on the fastest hyperspace beam unless and until Nodar cuts us off. Now let's get the job done!"

Stern was the first to applaud and every man there followed suit. They had spent a gruelling three months at speeds far beyond that of light and were impatient to be finished with the assignment. Their eyes gleamed with barely-suppressed anger as Linder started calling Nodar. "We are from Supreme Council. We wish to land. Our mission is charity but we insist on the right to land."

He had just begun to repeat the message when the prompt response came through, ungarbled. "Land any time. You have been out there one week, three hours, eighteen minutes, three seconds and never bothered to call us! You could have come in at any time."

"They have known all along!" There was a great outburst of indignation. "Those meatheads making fun of us!"

Linder held down the local sender at OFF while he turned to Stern. "A good sign for our safety, though, heh?"

"Yes," Stern agreed emphatically. "If they wanted to pull us into a trap they wouldn't be annoying us at this stage. They probably won't throw any obstacles in our way when we leave."

Linder nodded and pointed at Barnes. "Your team will keep

communications open and we'll get data back to Terra as long as we can."

The stubby man saluted smartly and left with his five aides for Message Center.

"Go down to 18,000, sir?" Crawford asked. "18.9 should give us the best descent trajectory."

"First I'll notify them. We're dealing with a touchy bunch. An unannounced hyperdrive boom might send them into some nasty defense scramble." He spoke into his wrist microphone. "Hello, Nodar. Hello, Nodar. This is Commander Linder speaking, Linder of the *Probe*. We are coming down within the next two hours. This will necessitate a brief return to hyperspace and there—."

"We will anticipate the visual boom," chuckled a deep voice behind which interweaving lines of squeaks were running. "Our calculation for your best trajectory in normal space is for you to come back to it at 18.3846 thousand miles. You will then be square on our landing beam. Good luck."

"Maybe they've forgotten their galactic good manners," Stern smiled, "but not their navigation."

The Commander disregarded him. Shifting from normal space and back was always physiologically disruptive, if only slightly so each time, and every long voyager, according to his specific makeup, was allotted a limited number of such shifts before being retired from the service. A shame to use any of it up on such a short hop but from now on this diplomatic transaction had to be handled rapidly, so rapidly that Nodar could not anticipate every move.

He pressed the field-shift button.

A FEW minutes later they were back in normal space, coasting on Nodar's landing beam. "Doesn't make sense," Stern insisted. "The beam's perfectly clear yet every other signal we've picked up is a complete garble."

"I told you—they were just throwing sand in our eyes."

"But Barnes says the garbles were all ground-to-ground signals, thousands of different ones and none for us. They still know standard Galactese when they speak directly to us."

The *Probe* was down to 14 thousand, moving smoothly, and the Commander sympathetically patted the semanticist's shoulder. "There's no call on your specialty, that's what's worrying you. Mustn't go introspective on us now, eh?"

"I'm not sure I mustn't, sir," he stood firm. "But I won't."

"Good enough. In the final

analysis the doing's what counts, I always say, not the thinking."

He leaned over the navigation screen, propping himself on his two stiffly outstretched arms, and Stern knew he was no longer there for Linder, not while the Commander concentrated on the problem of landing the *Probe*. Stern moved along the catwalk past the open doorway of the Message Center to the curving permaquartz window from which the descent could be studied. As he watched Nodar's features rise toward him, first silver blue, then breaking into broad continents of green and tan and brown with brilliant clusters of metropolitan lights here and there on the night side, he kept wondering about all those meaningless picture signals they had intercepted. On Terra there had been a dangerous cult of non-communication way back in the late twentieth century, at the very time man's greatest era was dawning. But that, everyone realized today, was due to neurotic fear of the grandeur—and responsibilities—ahead. Could a whole planet still go neurotic?

It was a terrible question and he brooded on it, wondering how ruthless the Council's treatment must be to bring this civilization back to normalcy. Certainly it was a question to keep from Linder as long as possible; his tendency toward prompt and decisive action had to be checked as much as possible.

Then they were landing, the anti-gravity jets letting the *Probe* sink slowly into the waiting cradle until it stood still against the usual manscape of one- and two-hundred story buildings. "Stern to the bridge," Linder called on the intercom. "You'd better be part of the landing delegation—just in case they really are in symbol trouble."

"Thank you, sir!" Stern replied, grateful, and hurried to the bridge.

There were eight men in this first group to leave the craft. They started across the vast and empty checkerboard area leading from the gantry to the sparkling Reception Center building. At least in one respect, despite three decades of increasingly erratic behavior, Nodar was following standard procedure; interstellar spaceports always were laid out in huge black and white squares. From the distance which was emphasized by this linear perspective a solitary figure was coming toward them square by square.

Stern was the first to pinpoint the thing making the official greeter's walk so peculiar. His arms, instead of moving to the rhythm of his advancing body, were swinging back and forth at separate rates of speed. As the figure came closer, the Com-

mander muttered: "It looks as if he's playing some kind of gymnastic game by himself. I don't think he cares whether we're here or not—a fine greeting, I must say!"

Then they could see the smiling (or was it smiling?) face. "Something odd about his eyes too," Crawford said.

"No, the eyes are all right," Barnes insisted. "He's anatomically normal but you got that impression because only one side of his face is smiling and the other's kind of expressionless, almost bored!"

He was still striding toward them, a handsome man well over seven feet as planetary hospitality officials were supposed to be, and his left hand, the more-rapidly swinging one, was making elaborate arabesques in the air.

"Crazy habit," said the Commander, "never seen the likes of that before."

"The eyes *are* peculiar," Stern said in a low voice to the rest of the group, "and I'll tell you why. Every once in a while they blink out of step with each other."

"No," said Barnes, "I don't see anything like that. There—they just blinked together. And there, together ag— no, I'm not sure this time!"

BUT Barnes withdrew his aggressive stare and fell silent as the Nodarian came closer. Dressed in the same sheath garments as the visitors, he was now beaming at them on both sides of his face. "We are glad to welcome ancient brothers. My given name is Jackson," he said in a deep, full voice and extended the right hand to Linder who was resplendent in the gold sash of Space Commander, while his other hand continued to play gracefully up and around and down and under and up, moulding air to instantly vanishing shapes.

Linder, a little dubious, accepted the greeting. "We have been eager to visit here. Contact has been so infrequent and Glia's Supreme Council has wondered —." He stopped because Jackson's eyes had drifted away. The man seemed to be listening either to some vigorous mathemusic that had started up on the main building's PA system or some other music, much more languid, coming from another direction. "I said, Greeter Jackson, that contact has been so infrequent and—."

"Oh, I heard everything you said," the Nodarian nodded patiently, still not bothering to focus his gaze on him.

The Commander fumed at the indignity but remained silent. Stern hastily filled the gap. "I'm official semanticist for the expedition," he said, himself disconcerted by the brief flicker of something like disdain at one cor-

ner of Jackson's smile. "Well, I can see my services in that capacity won't be essential here—."

"—certainly not," Barnes boomed. "—but I would like to say we have come here principally to ascertain whether you are in any difficulties which the combined resources of Glia's Council might help you face."

"*We* in any difficulties!" Jackson laughed. "We need no other planet's help. How could *you* help *us?*"

"I hardly call that a polite greeting!" Linder exploded. "Certainly not an appreciative one. Galactic practice states you people should signal every hour on a universal pulse line. Out of ten thousand settled zones yours is the only one in violation. And now you receive us with arrogance and— and—hand-circle waving!"

The left hand's movements slowed down but did not stop while Jackson's steel blue eyes settled, unnervingly blinkless now, on them. "No, I guess you're not ready for it," he cryptically announced. The smile came back, even warmer than before, but they were still a little shaken as he bade them follow. "One pupil," Stern whispered to the Commander, "one pupil was more dilated than the other!"

"Don't I have enough problems without your fantasies?" Linder came back crossly. "Cut it out."

"You heard what the Commander said," Barnes joined in, more menacing then his superior.

Stern considered the Message Center Chief with contempt. The broad-beamed runt was basking in his usual reflected-glory routine, cultivating the Commander's favor by encouraging his natural impulsiveness. *A fine example of cooperation we can set for anyone else!* he thought bitterly.

But, like the others, he was quickly distracted from personal problems by what became apparent as soon as they entered Reception's building. Inside, it had a rundown appearance, nothing you could precisely put your finger on but the paint seemed slightly faded, and chairs, lockers, tables, in fact all objects, had a very slightly worn appearance. This was something no other planet permitted to happen; Reception was the place travellers saw first and every normal planet wanted to make a good initial impression.

The people, though, there was the real reason for feeling that everything was sloppy, lax. Groups of officials and onlookers were milling about the great center hall area but they hardly seemed to notice their guests. Many of them had listening devices in their ears and their eyes wandered about even more outrageously than did Jackson's

while everywhere there were hands making pointless gestures.

"Look at that computer!" Linder snorted, beside himself with disgust. "It must be half out!"

THE eight men gaped at the machine, standard spaceport size, that covered one wall. Here and there dial plates had fallen away, revealing disrupted wire circuits. "In the name of Council," Linder snapped, "I'm telling you to get that Thinker fixed."

"Oh, it's in good enough shape," Jackson yawned. "We don't need the *whole* thing functioning."

"And I'm ordering you to need the whole thing! No wonder we haven't been receiving regular signals."

People within earshot were grinning and turning away. "Commander—"

"Linder. L-I—"

"No need to spell *anything* out for us ever, sir. As I said, we don't need the whole thing. We could fix it easily enough any time the necessity arose. But it never will again, I assure you."

"Let's go to your Central Headquarters so I can settle this with someone in authority!"

"There isn't anybody in authority." He considered the Commander's puzzled expression. "Because everyone is capable of authority."

Barnes roared with humorless laughter and waved his hand at a few men gaping toward a wall. "These characters capable of authority?"

A few briefly swung eyes toward them, then back to the wall. "You people certainly are not ready," Jackson sighed. "Well, come along anyway, I'll show you Central Headquarters, such as it is now."

They followed him into the street, gawking at an area robot control computer on the central island. It, too, had sections of broken plating with unattached wires crazily dangling.

"Some kind of robot revolt?" Crawford whispered to Stern.

"Looks like it could be," Stern agreed. "You can't adequately control thinking robots without area computers mediating their activities. But still—there's never been a robot revolt. Maybe something else peculiar explains—,"

Jackson who had been listening to music on an ear set turned around and said, "Of course you can control them without area computers. I mean, *we* can. Anyway we don't need so many robots now."

Barnes was about to register another vehement protest but his chief shook his head and whispered, "No use, there's something the matter with this one. I'll have him disciplined as soon as I talk to the top people."

"Why are you turning this into a diplomatic prestige match?" Stern broke in, his voice even lower than the others. "There's something more important going on here. Didn't you notice what those types in Reception were gawking at?"

"Us!" Barnes snorted.

"No, there was some kind of smear of light flowing across the wall and every once in a while I thought I saw one or two words!"

"For the last time, Stern," and this time Linder's voice was loud enough to echo from a building across the narrowing street, "last time, Stern, no more morbid talk —more morbid talk—." The words, coming back like a kind of self-mockery, threw him off his verbal stride and he fell silent, satisfying himself with the chance to glare at the semanticist. Who the devil needed a symbol specialist on a mission like this anyway?

THEY turned into a huge plaza where the echo phenomenon ceased, but the same sloppiness attracted their attention as had been the case at the spaceport. The pavement approach to Nodar's Central Headquarters was evenly laid out but, wherever repairs had been made, there was no sign of an attempt to cover the patches up and maintain pleasing visual symmetry. "There'll have to be a Glia Expeditionary Force," Linder muttered, unable to remain silent in the face of such deliberate disorganization. "They're suffering from some weird disease. They'll need all the help every planet can send."

At this Jackson, who had not seemed to be listening, turned around and gave them all the most icy glance they had ever encountered. Then he nodded his head into an angelic smile. Linder, refusing to be cowed, strode to the insolent greeter's side and entered the building ahead of him. A few seconds later he whirled around and came back to the other seven who by now were just about to step into the place. "They've made some kind of movie madhouse of their planetary headquarters!" he muttered, stunned. "Come and see for yourselves."

They did. The hall they entered was monumentally vast like all planetary centers, to express the majesty and prestige of its function. It was partially darkened and hundreds of men and women were lounging about on chairs and sofas, talking to each other while looking at the wall at one end of the building. This wall was covered for several hundred yards with blobs rapidly sinking toward the floor and similar patchers reappearing near the ceiling while words, mathematical symbols, three-dimensional color patterns and other disconnected

symbols streamed in and out of the confusion to add the final touch of chaos. Many of the viewers were also eating and here and there were even young couples necking as they watched the wall.

Once in a while somebody seemed to look straight at the party that had entered but the glance was always brief. "This is the limit," Barnes said. "Commander, Council prestige is at stake here."

"No, let's try to stay calm," Stern insisted, "we're surrounded by potentially hostile people and—"

"Are you afraid?" Barnes taunted him.

"You know that's not it," the taller man came back. "I just think we ought to try to find some sense to all this."

"I think you *are* afraid," Linder broke in. "Fine analysis jobs our psychology people are doing these days! They're supposed to weed out every fearmonger *before* a hyperspace team takes off." He leaned toward Stern, all his frustrations finally achieving a point of focus. "You'll never get another expedition if we make it back. Get this straight—my job isn't primarily to protect our hides. It's to make obvious to our hosts that Glia Council is supreme everywhere, the one, ultimate institution for maintaining stability throughout the Galaxy."

Jackson, for the first time, was giving *all* of his attention to them. "You have a complaint, Commander?" he said. "Why not address it to me? Don't worry about being violently treated. We *want* you to get back to Terra with the news."

Arms akimbo, Linder faced the alien unflinchingly. "Space voyagers don't worry about their personal safety. I demand," his voice rose to a shout that reverberated unpleasantly through the soaring vault, "I demand we get the respect, the total attention, due to a delegation from Glia. We are not here in search of violence and you know it. Glia missions have always been peaceful and to help our fellows. But there is such a thing as carrying matters too far and you Nodarians are threatening to do it with your disrespect for what we represent!"

They were receiving many more glances, all filled with distaste, from members of the audience. But the glances remained brief and Barnes shouted in an equally stentorian voice, "We demand your attention! Contact must be resumed!"

Now some shouts echoed back at them. "You're boring us!" "Stop your yawnmaking!" "Nothing worse than an inferior level of intelligence!"

Jackson, never taking his hypnotic gaze from his guests, gracefully waved his hands and the Nodarians fell silent. Many of

them returned to their former activities but about fifteen formed a circle about the visitors. "We are agreed?" the greeter said to his compatriots. They all nodded.

"Good." He turned to Linder and Barnes. "As I said before to you, you're really not ready yet for what we are hoping to tell you and we have our own work to continue, work that will never menance anyone. Some day, in fact, gratitude will ring from one end of the Galaxy to the other."

"But I don't see," Stern wondered aloud, "why you have to withdraw from contact with all the other planets if your plans are so innocuous."

"At this point," Jackson smiled, "it doesn't matter one way or the other so we have not bothered. Our isolation did minimize the danger of interference. We are not afraid of contact—we just don't need it now."

"Isn't that a rather selfish attitude?"

"Not at all. We're working to something which will, as I said, widen the scope of everyone everywhere. We don't threaten you and you *cannot* threaten us."

"Keep out of this, Stern." The Commander moved closer to the other man. "As for you, Jackson, I view this ingathering of your friends as a kind of threat."

Jackson grinned. "Yes, slightly. Your manners as a guest have been very bad. You have been childishly annoyed by what you cannot understand and you will be childishly treated, all of you except the man who has been talking a little more sensibly to me." With that he easily picked the Commander up, fell back into a chair and turned Linder over to give him a few sharp whacks. While Stern looked on helplessly, others grabbed Barnes and the rest, in each case administering a brief spanking. Even as the Nodarians spanked away most of them continued to look toward the movie wall for a further supply of irrationality.

A minute later the red-faced visitors were set back on their feet while most of their mild assailants walked away, each laughing on one side of his face or the other. Jackson held two empty palms toward them. "You see—nothing else. You are free to go."

Linder struggled to reassert his dignity. "This isn't the end of the matter."

"Of course now, Commander. Some day we'll reestablish the contact you so ardently desire. Very peacefully too."

"Council will not wait *that* long," Linder said over his shoulder as he stalked away.

* * *

THEY returned to the ship in silence and when those who

had remained on board demanded to know what had happaned Linder insisted they be told nothing. "The matter," he said ominously, "will be settled when we reach Terra. Stern, you're to keep silent too. Council is going to be very interested in finding out why you received such favored treatment."

"But, Commander, I think I have a slight idea what this is all about—"

"Not interested in your ideas," Linder said angrily, striding away. "Tell them to Council."

"I don't have the equipment in my cabin to work the analysis out."

"Silence!" Linder had turned at the door of Stern's cabin and was glaring at him. "I don't want to hear a word from you the rest of this voyage."

Stern sighed and calmly sat down at his desk to make some preliminary calculations. It would probably work out all right; after a few days in hyperspace Linder would come to him, more or less his old congenial self, and this prohibition would be quickly forgotten.

But it did not work out that way. Every time Stern started a conversation with the Commander or Barnes they stared unresponsively at him and even Crawford sometimes backed away, trying to exchange as few words as possible.

One day Linder approached the permaquartz window to find Stern, deep in thought, muttering to himself some ancient rhyme about *Patty cake, patty cake, baker man.* Oblivious to everything else about him, Stern was holding his right hand above his head and his left close to his stomach. The right hand, palm downward was moving in a clockwise direction while the other went anti-clockwise, but at the words *Baker man* the movement of both hands was abruptly reversed. For a while Linder watched these reversals, sometimes inaccurately changed into both clockwise or both anti-clockwise movements. Finally he said "Hmmph!" and strode away, leaving Stern standing there in confusion at discovering he had been observed.

Following this embarrassing episode, Stern tried several times to explain what he had been doing but was perfunctorily rejected in each attempt. The days hung heavily as more and more crew members, deciding to play it safe, imitated their chief and treated him like a pariah. Most even refused to exchange brief comments about the *Probe's* navigational progress across the Galaxy, the spaceman's polite equivalent of the landman's time-killing rehashes of the weather. Eventually Crawford alone was left among those indifferent to

Linder's wrath and Barnes' prying.

IT'S an utterly ridiculous situation," Stern protested one day when Crawford came by.

"I know it."

What's he going to accuse me of when we reach Terra—secret communication with the enemy?"

"Practically. You'll be tried on suspicion of that possibility."

"And acquitted of it. He'll look plain silly after the hearings."

"I suspect that too. But don't forget he's been made to look very silly—a grown man getting spanked!"

"You went through the same indignity and still managed to be philosophical enough to talk to me."

"Stern, *you* didn't have to be philosophical at all. Frankly, even I feel puzzled by their discriminating against the rest of us like that."

Stern shrugged. "I think they realized I already had a tiny inkling of what was up while the rest of you, Linder and Barnes especially, were arrogantly rubbing them the wrong way. You see, if there's any condenscending to be done, they're the ones who've earned the privilege now."

Crawford's brow wrinkled thoughtfully. "You *do* have some kind of inkling!" He considered the portable electromagnetic projector at Stern's elbow. "You were working that before I came in, weren't you?"

The older man strummed the arm of his chair. "It's not good enough for the final proof. I need the main projector in the Commander's quarters." He slammed the arm with sudden vehemence. "I've had enough—he's going to listen to me before it's too late for him! He's too good a spaceman to ruin his career the way he probably will if the hearing against me gets going. They'll put him down for an obstructive old fool and never let him make a solar system run again!"

Crawford considered him for a long second. "You're really serious, aren't you? What makes you so sure you could convince him?"

"I only suspect I can. But I'll need the projector for it."

"Well, I still don't see how, Stern. You ought to hear him talking about finding you playing some kind of kid's game, moving your hands like crazy. What do I say if he brings that up again?"

"All right." Stern rose from his chair, placed his left hand horizontally above his head, his right vertically against his stomach, and started reciting the nonsense words. Each time he came to *baker man,* he changed the rotational direction of one or both hands. Then he reversed the placement of the hands themselves. Unsmiling, after about a dozen changes, he said: "Now

you try it, Crawford. No, I'm not kidding around. Every time I reach *baker* there'll be a change. If I say *left baker man* only your left will reverse its rotation. Or I may say *right baker man.* Or I may not indicate a hand and then you'll reverse rotation for both. Then when I say *change baker man,* put the right hand where the left is and vice versa and continue the same rotation as before the command—that is, if the right hand was above your head, going clockwise, when I say *change,* your left hand, as soon as it's shifted above your head, will turn clockwise."

Crawford hesitantly got up, crowding the little cabin until Stern sat down. He held his hands just as Stern had at the start of the exercise. "Makes me feel a little silly," he grinned, rolling his eyes upward to the raised hand.

"Maybe it is in itself—but not in its implications. Okay, *Patty cake, patty cake, baker man.* And now *Patty cake, patty cake, left baker man.* And *Patty cake, patty cake, change baker man!*"

As the last instruction was given, Crawford, hopelessly tangled, flailed his arms about. "Can't keep them turning in the right direction!" Annoyed with himself, he stopped altogether. "Let's start again. I'll get it yet."

"No, I think the point's been made. After a while you might learn to do it right but it would take practice."

"A matter of coordination, isn't it?" Stern nodded. "Then those hand-wrigglings of the Nodarians were actually purposeful exercises."

"Right. And now that they've mastered really complex maneuvers, the hand-wrigglings are probably games, too, a part of play."

"Why should they have bothered at all with something like that?"

"Because it's one tiny part of a much wider set of disciplines. They have made themselves *totally* ambidextrous, not a trace of left- or right-handedness left. Not just physical exercise and disciplines, though, *all* processes dealing with attention are involved."

Crawford's eyes widened. "That would mean both halves of the brain are *equally* used! They might be able to do twice the thinking we do."

"No, my friend, the difference is much greater because it has gone far beyond questions of handedness. Just tell the Commander what I've told you. And say the change probably extends to the very nature of consciousness itself but I'll need the best projector to prove that."

Crawford bewilderedly considered his two hands. "Complete

control—can you beat that! The Commander'll have to listen all right."

AFTER he was gone, though, Stern, gloomy and impatient, wondered whether the younger man's optimism was justified. Suppose the Commander refused and he had to wait more than three months, cooped up and in coventry, before he could find out whether he was right? This project had turned out to be one of psychology rather than semantics but everything, absolutely everything, would be affected if he—.

The intercom speaker grated in response to someone's breath. "Stern to Commander's quarters on the double!" shouted Linder.

Grinning with relief, he jumped up, at the same time unlocking a reel of magnetic tape from the projector housing. He hurried along the catwalk to the bow where the Commander was waiting, scowl and all.

"No time for apologetic chitchat," Linder snapped. "Crawford here has spoken to me and I'm interested. Not convinced, just interested. What do you propose doing?"

"I need the projector to test out my wider conclusions, sir."

"You have one in your cabin, don't you? Your inventory statement should show you do."

"It can't project a reel at slow enough speed, sir. It wasn't designed for the kind of analysis I'm suggesting."

"Oh," he muttered half-mockingly, glancing toward Barnes, "so you have a reel with you?"

"Yes, and several more back in the cabin. They're blur pictures, garbles we picked up when we were hovering above Nodar."

"You're wasting the Commander's valuable time." Barnes shouted. "All nonsense if you ask me!"

"Only because you have a one-tracked mind." Stern laughed at his own remark. "That may turn out to be very funny in the next few minutes."

"Get on with it, Stern, before I change *my* mind," ordered the Commander.

"Yes, sir!"

He quickly slipped the reel onto the projector and, setting it for a very slow speed, turned the machine on. The screen showed the usual Nodarian television blur.

"There you are," Barnes said, "a complete waste of time!"

Disregarding him, Stern twisted the speed dial into slower and slower positions; all the while watching the screen. Suddenly, as projection speed came down to six percent of the speed at which it had originally been received, they all gasped. They seemed to be looking at the performance of some kind of drama with perfectly normal human

characters but the figures were sufficiently transparent for another set of characters with another distinctive background to be seen behind them and these seemed to be acting out a separate drama. All the while equally transparent complex equations, charts and diagrams were pouring across the screen.

"That's what *we* find to be a blur!" observed Stern.

"They speed up their picture signal during transmission," Linder said, "and slow it down at the receiving end." He stopped, rubbing his chin thoughtfully. 'No, that can't be it. In the Reception Center Building and at their Central, too, they were looking *directly* at such blurs!"

"Exactly, sir. They can *see* the components of what we find a blur—if we unscrambled the sound track squeaks we'd undoubtedly find the same thing there. The question is, *How can they do it?* and the answer is very frightening—and encouraging."

"You said something about a change of consciousness."

"A radical change. They've been developing it during their isolation period and there's no reason why they won't teach us when the preparatory period's over. They're developing a special kind of inward power that would make it silly for them to want primitive control over other men. *They're* the next stage in *our* evolution."

"ESP!" Barnes broke in. "They sensed our antagonism so they humiliated us."

"NO, they *saw* your antagonism." Stern snapped off the machine. "They saw it because their powers of direct observation are so complete, catching every slightest, revealing movement of the face. Look, gentlemen, what have been the evolutionary stages until now? First, self-perpetuating and replicating crystals. Then conditioned-reflex life, followed by the growth of consciousness which in turn gave rise to the development of social consciousness. For the last few centuries we've been in this phase and it has given us the power to spread across the Galaxy and assure one common level of humanity everywhere. Individual and social consciousness interacting—what, we have wondered, would be the next stage to arise from it? But we have done everything to prevent the next stage because we feared any one planet developing along unique lines, lines that might end in a threat to the rest of us. Nodar deliberately isolated itself to be temporarily unique."

"What kind of consciousness could there be besides individual and social as we know them?" Crawford wondered uneasily.

"Nordarian—and if you had it your ten billion brain cells could store up so much knowledge you wouldn't need thinking machines, just purely physical robots!"

"Let's get down to cases," Linder said, for once politely restrained in his impatience.

"All right, Commander, here's a case. You're standing at the entrance of a darkened room which contains a thousand objects. A light flicks on and off, barely revealing the room's contents. Then you are asked to describe as much of the crowded room as you can remember seeing in that brief flash. Your description covers only a small percentage of the room's contents. The percentage may increase with practice but it will still be small."

"But haven't you really seen more than that?" Crawford protested. "Neurosurgery—"

"Certainly," Stern agreed. "If the neuro-surgeon manages to touch precisely the right point in your brain while you're under a local anaesthetic, you'll start describing details of that room you had not realized you had seen. That's unconscious knowledge and it's much vaster than what you consciously acquire. Still though, you find that, even with this additional description, you've only covered a small percentage of the facts about that room. Now, if you're permitted to look into such a mystery room for, say, five minutes, you have a chance to move your eyes from point to point, to become aware of more things—and the neuro-surgeon's work will show your unconscious knowledge has also grown from longer viewing. Conscious and unconscious knowledge feed each other."

"I can just barely follow you now," Linder protested. "This is getting awfully complicated."

"Because we're dealing with an awfully complicated—and important—phenomenon. I'll get to the big point in just a moment but, first, one more case—a little simpler to follow, I hope. You enter a well-lighted room. In one corner two men are seated, playing chess. In another corner two men are repairing a machine. When you look at the chess players the machine repairers are barely visible in the corner of your eye. If you concentrate on the chess situation, you learn close to nothing about the repair work. And when you concentrate on the repair work the chess game fades out."

"So what?" Linder demanded. "You merely move your eyes back and forth and follow both things if you want to!"

"Exactly the point I was hoping to make, sir. This constant moving back and forth gives us the impression that our conscious attention is on two things at the

(*Continued on page 126*)

a SOVIET VIEW of AMERICAN SF

By ALEXANDER KAZANTSEV

(Translated from the Russian by John R. Isaac)

Science-fiction fans in Soviet Russia recently were able to read a new book: Science Fiction Stories by American Writers. *It was edited by one Alexander Kazantsev, who also wrote a preface in which he analyzed US sf and fantasy in terms of Soviet ideology. The preface, translated and excerpted by John R. Isaac, makes, we think, fascinating reading. It is like looking at the same object through the opposite end of the telescope (or microscope).*

The stories in the anthology are: The Cold Equations, *by Tom Godwin;* The Long Watch *and* Logic of Empire, *by Robert Heinlein;* Two from Luna, *by T. L. Thomas;* The Journey Will Be Long, *by Allan Innes;* Exploration Team, *by Murray Leinster;* Omnilingual, *by H. Beam Piper;* Wonder Child, *by Joseph Shallt; and* The Playground *and* And the Rock Cried Out, *by Ray Bradbury.*

Kazantsev is a professional sf writer, and is best known in the West as the originator of the hypothesis that the crater thought to have been caused by the impact of a great Tungus meteorite on June 30, 1908, was instead caused by the explosion of an atomic-powered Martian space ship. In this preface the Good Doctor Issac Asimov may be interested to learn that he is a professor at Princeton; readers may be startled by an incredible interpretation of The Cold Equations. *But for the most part the jaded American reader can almost enjoy a renaissance of his sense of wonder merely by gazing upon this portrait of Western science fiction as seen through the eyes of a Communist.*—Ed.

HAVE patience, reader! We set out on a bold journey in the jungles of American science fiction. It is worth delving deeply into these jungles in order to understand better what is worrying Americans today, among whom many search for a way out of the dense thicket. But our finds will be rare, and on our way we will

meet many who testify against fantasy, feeding on an inconsolable hatred against the bold and lucid dreams, the fantasy to which they have not the strength to raise themselves.

* * *

In "Exploration Team," Murray Leinster was led to the idea that technical progress leads man into a blind ally. Wild and impassible jungles of unknown and rapacious plants, flying vampires like naked monkeys, terrible land reptilian monster-sphinxes—fast, dexterous, bloodthirsty, cruelly revenging themselves for the death of their brothers—all this faces one person by himself on a newly opened planet not suitable for settlement. And a colony of perfect robots, industrious, precise, untiring is created there, but . . . not thinking creatively and therefore not able rapidly to orientate themselves in the new conditions, they do not stand up; they perish. To make up for it the man survives, illegally settled here and subjugating the nature of the new planet not with the help of machines but with the help . . . of a domesticated reconnaissance eagle carrying a television camera on its breast, even of performing bears, intelligent and devoted to him. The friends of man are animals, not machines, as the author, satiated with the achievements of civilization, says between the lines. And at the same time in the story is presented the correct conception that there is no perfect machine able to replace the living, inquisitive, creative mind of man.

A PROFESSOR of biochemistry at Princeton University [sic], Asimov, author of many novels about robots (*I Robot; Caves of Steel; The Currents of Space*) has also made many digressions into the psychology of anthropomorphous machines. There are novels in which the function of leadership by nations and peoples is abandoned to the robots. The robots are impassive, cold, and exact, but chiefly they are as obedient to their masters as, say, to the cold memory of John Foster Dulles . . .

. . . Interplanetary ships are ploughing cosmic space. On a satellite of Jupiter the roulette wheels work smartly; unbridled debauchery rules the cities of Venus; on yet another planet people stab one another in order to seize the treasures of bosoms. Weak, oppressed, becoming extinct, the natives stretch out tridactylous hands begging alms from impudent and energetic, strong and cruel Earthmen Gangsters seize interplanetary rockets and escape into the depths of the cosmos from the pursuit of the police. A star girl, notorious throughout the Solar System,

flaunts her licentiousness. All this we find in the books of the "king" of visionaries, Hamilton, and other writers of similar trend.

Edward E. Smith, Ph.D, wrote "space opera," as the English call it—a multi-volumned series of novels about the "Lensman": *Triplanetary, Galactic Patrol, Children of the Lens,* and so forth, like the series of novels about "Tarzan" . . . Two galaxies clashed; they displayed to one another two antagonistic cultures. One is on the planet Aris, virtuous and lofty; the other is on the planet Eddor, just as lofty, but gloomy, bearer of an evil principle. These two cultures, two principles—good and evil clash everywhere . . . War is indispensable to the author, unable to conceive of his familiar capitalistic society without war. He transfers it to the Galaxy. In place of the Entente the "Triplanetary" union is created—Earth, Venus, Mars . . .

Here it is, the looking glass of fantasy! All earthly conflicts, imperialist unions, the blocs of NATO and SEATO—all this according to the principle of geometric proportion is transferred to cosmic and scale as an invariable which has set once and for all . . .

Here is one more cosmic story. The heroes, finding themselves on an unknown planet, discover gigantic structures whose creation could be within the power only of titans, but nowhere do they see any trace of life. So, not having unraveled the mystery, they take off on the return trip, and en route they discover that their ship is infected with microbeings devouring the metal . . . This the microbeings erected, in the course of their vital activity, in the unknown structures, walls, towers like the colonies of coral on Earth. They multiply with incredible rapidity. It is possible for the explorers to reach Earth, to save themselves, but . . . this means bringing the monstrous infection to their native planet, dooming mankind, perhaps, to death or despair, to an unparalled struggle for life! And the selfless astronauts decide to make the journey long . . . They direct the ship not towards Earth, but away from her, traveling away into the abyss of the cosmos in order never to return. The story "The Journey Will Be Long" was written by an American who believes in the heroic deed, in selflessness, in the better traits of human nature.

WE turn one more page of cosmic stories. Before us again is the cold cruelty of the boundless cosmos. This time it has been utilized not for the sake of an assertion of the heroism and nobility with which the astro-

nauts themselves are endowed—the cold, mechanical cruelty of calculations and equations dooms to an inevitable death a youthful being, an eighteen-year-old girl who thoughtlessly stows away on a special relief rocket, intended for only one man, in order to see her dear brother, who has a job on a distant planet. Tom Godwin wrote "The Cold Equations," a psychological story of terror. On the strength of the laws of the cold equation the weight of the superfluous person automatically excludes him from the rocket. Superfluous weight is superfluous life. It must be thrown overboard It does not occur to the author to show genuine heroism in this most acute situation, readiness to sacrifice oneself. No! The cold and cruel pilot, expending a fixed quantity of sympathetic words and explaining to the passenger that according to the laws of cosmic travel each superfluous passenger is liable to destruction, lets the doomed girl talk by radio with her shocked brother and write a letter to her parents. Then this mechanical executor of duty and representative of cold inhumanity firmly presses with his hand a red lever and throws a confused girl with blue eyes and little sandlas with brilliant beads overboard into the cosmos . . . How much more human would that cold equation have been if there had been a different face for the brackets, a genuinely manful man-hero, leaving the girl in the rocket and switching on the automatic apparatus for descent! But the American novelist was interested only in supercharged terror, and not at all in the illustration of the strength and nobility of man.

* * *

The next step for American writers has been telepathy, black magic, a mysticism which is nourishing the fantasy of quite a number of America's writers. It is well known that fantasy in America also serves reaction. Besides the cheap, empty, or deliberately obscure creations of fantasy writers, many strongly pronounced anti-Soviet novels about war and espionage are published in the USA for the intimidating, the fooling of the American reader. Such books do not deserve any serious examination and analysis, for their aim is clear—to poison the mind of the people with hatred and spite.

But meanwhile fantasy is a quality of the greatest value. Without fantasy it would have been impossible to invent differential and integral calculus. Thus spoke Vladimir Ilich Lenin about the strength of fantasy. Fantasy is the ability to imagine that which is not. It lies at the base of any creation raising man above the animal world. The scholar advancing a scientific

hypothesis is possessed by fantasy, the designer mentally picturing a never-before existing machine is possessed by fantasy, the poet is possessed by fantasy; but fantasy is the result also of the notion of supernatural forces, hell, ghosts, devils, and so on.

Every fantasy, whether it lifts one to a dream or simply carries us somewhere else in the world, is different from reality; invariably it alienates one from reality, reflects it, becoming a mirror of this reality. It is characteristic of fantasy to reflect reality, emphasizing one or another of its aspects; invaluably for literature it is called to protest against the existing order, angrily to expose the gloomy side of contemporary society.

AS we have seen, American science fiction rests not on a dream, not on fantasy directed by bright desires but on a fantasy carrying the reader into a world unlike reality, or on introducing into the familiar world frightening exaggerated achievements of technology, provoking unusual situations.

The Russian translation of Ray Bradbury's book *Fahrenheit 451* shows that in America there *is* a science fiction literature of Wellesian trend. This is not a literature of light dreams but a literature of the free or involuntary *denial* of capitalistic reality, of an unwillingness to be reconciled with the terrorist obscuratism of McCarthy or with the adventurist politics of galloping along the brink of the abyss of war.

Ray Bradbury's fantasy made his book the "magnifying glass of conscience" for the honest American. "Look where we are going" he says. Great technology attains a prodigious height and velocity, television surrounds us on all sides with abstract representation, fences us off from the real world and from anxieties; covered by a fireproof coating our houses cannot burn, but . . . the firemen are reigned up, in order, at the first denunciation, to speed the belligerent salamander to the location of the incident, convulsively unwind fire hoses and direct at the fire a stream of . . . kerosene! And by the fire brigade are burned all illegally preserved books—it makes no difference whether it be Shakespeare or a Bible—enveloped by fire they will scatter in the air as if they were a flock of strange birds flaming with red and yellow feathers . . . And the ashes cover everything around with a dirt snow, and the soot of mourning lies on the sweaty faces of the thugs, who have found worthy colleagues in the contemporary America which not so long ago burned the books of Marx, Gorki, Twain . . .

Bradbury, observing reality,

shows the distinctive discrepancies between the possibilities of the development of technology and of culture, which have already been observed in the USA. Technology develops, rises ever more, but the culture of man, deafened, blinded by television and radio, by being left without books, shamefully degenerates, wastes away. And the reader cries: "It must not continue any further!"

Bradbury, like Wells, does not attach importance to the scientific or technical improvements and discoveries described by him —for him they are necessary only for the expression of his intention. But the situation and the character of his heroes Bradbury draws with maximum reality, even when he resorts to a fantasy far from science.

BRADBURY does not see a way from the cruel system of the oppression of peoples in the name of the dollar and of profit. But the writer understands guilt and in the person of his heroes he assumes responsibility for all who act in the name of profit. In the short story "And The Rock Cried Out" Bradbury shows a wandering American couple. Europe and North America have ceased to exist. Atomic war . . . Something terrible, irreparable has happened. On the site of cities smoke radioactive craters; almost all their inhabitants have perished; everything an American might lean upon has crashed down, in whatever land he might find himself . . . And at night they hear how the people rejoice, suddenly feeling themselves free . . . Free from what? From that oppression which the Americans themselves always personified, which these helpless travelers—man and woman, doomed to violence, mob law—still continue to personify. They were not destroyed by atomic explosions, as were their countrymen, but were fated to be destroyed by the hatred of those whom yesterday they had oppressed . . . Bradbury's heroes understand the burden of responsibility and do not run from retribution . . .

Especially important in Bradbury's creative work is that he did not lose faith in man; he peeps into the hiding-places of his soul, pure and unpolluted, where in spite of everything there remains a grain of light and good. And if Bradbury would protest against the emasculation of all humanity from the soul of man by a hypertrophied technology, he does not at all disclaim technology, does not call for a primitive nature and wigwams. No, in his stories about cosmic flights he shows the heroism and striking character traits of people who are enjoying the wonderful achievements of technology.

Bradbury is only against the deformities of a technical century, and not against technical progress. And even if catastrophe were to befall the world—a fear of which is seen in many of Bradbury's works—if our descendants were to run wild, all the same something remains in their hearts that lights their future with a warm hope.

ROBERT HEINLEIN cannot conceive of a future with any other social system than capitalism. He assumes that capitalism will exist even in a time when man has taken possession of cosmic space, when the planet Venus, by new, perfected abilities of movement, will be no farther from the USA than is a Pacific island. And he decides to show in the story "Logic of Empire," the capitalistic colony of the future. Before us the colony on Venus is a world of monstrous exploitation and the slave labor of people recruited by deception or coercion, by despair or promises. On this planet, which was conquered by the genius of man, an auction takes place where recruited workers are put up for sale. The patron-buyers, the capitalists from Earth who settled here, resembling the farmer-slaveholders of the Southern states, feel the muscles of the purchasable slaves.

The fantastic views of Venus are terribly plausible. One could swear that the amphibious natives described by Heinlein really exist on Venus, inoffensive, weak, oppressed by the colonizers. In the remote, inaccessible Venusian swamps a community of fugitive slaves lives in a free-cossack camp; it lives in friendship with the amphibious natives, utilizing other assistance, installing on Venus a new tenor of life, different from the capitalist system. From all sides fugitive people rush here through the fog of the swamps. And the indigenes help them.

We turn another page of American science fiction. The Moon, the Moon! Friend of lovers and painters, dream of the astronauts! But there are, it turns out, people who dream of seeing an atomic base on the Moon. Imagine for a minute that this is so and that with this base govern power-lovers deserving of the evil memory of the raving Führer. The future of America itself would depend upon the caprice of the command of the Moon bombing base. At any minute this base might be utilized for criminal purposes.

It is just such a case of atomic blackmail that Robert Heinlein wished to show us in his story "The Long Watch." The story reflects a change for the better in American public opinion which was subsequently so strikingly manifested at the time of the vis-

it by N. S. Khrushchev in America. Heinlein, like many Americans who yesterday were still deluded, today believes, wants to believe, that crime may be prevented.

"Nine ships blasted off from Moon Base. Once in space, eight of them formed a globe around the smallest. They held this formation all the way to Earth. "The small ship displayed the insignia of an admiral—yet there was no living thing of any sort on her. She was not even a passenger ship, but a drone, a robot ship intended for radioactive cargo. This trip she carried nothing but a lead coffin—and a Geiger counter that was never quiet."

The hero of the story, at the cost of his life, averts a planned atomic crime—and in this is reflected the faith of the majority of ordinary Americans who, like the hero of the story, want passionately to preserve the world, who will not permit an atomic crime against humanity, even if for this, one would have to keep a long and hard watch.

Thus the cosmic theme becomes ever more realistic in American fantasy as the achievements of mankind, and first of all of the Soviet Union, become real in the conquest of the cosmos. This reflects a characteristic change for the better in the consciousness of Americans.

The science fiction branch of American literature does not stand still. If yesterday it, reflecing the pessimism and endlessness of doomed capitalism, finished off with the traditional "happy ending," parasitizing on science, making use of its achievements, its terminology, then today the voice of progressive writers stands ever more audibly in this literature, rendering an account on where the world is going.

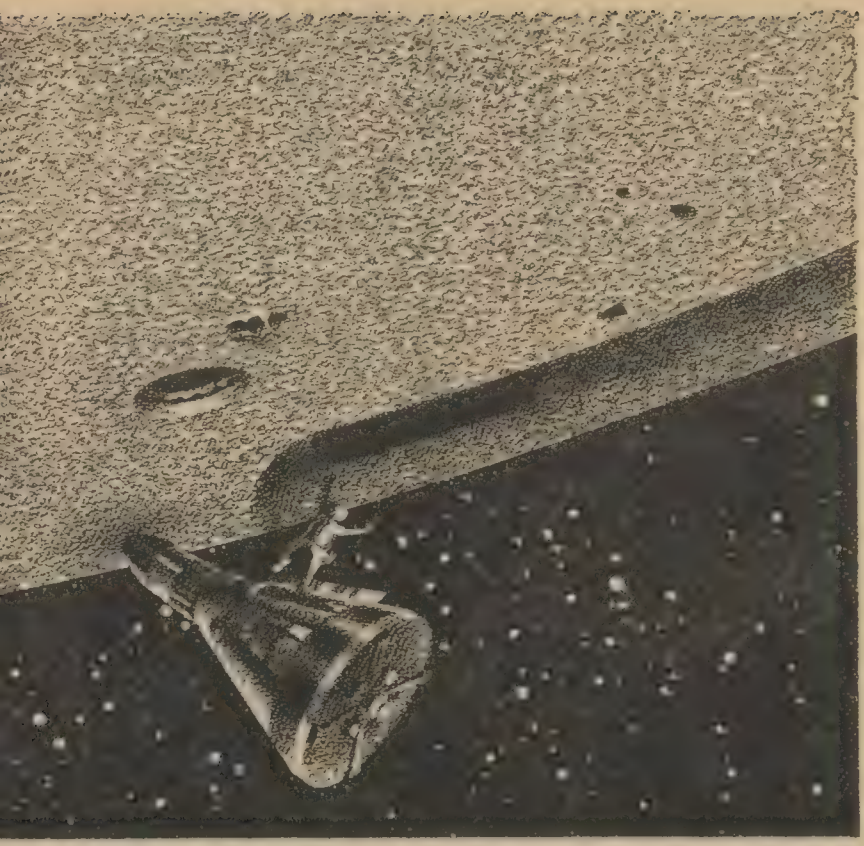
A definite part of American science fiction literature attracts a critical attitude towards reality and towards the cautioning notes of tribunes who are seeing the destruction of a way of life well-rated by the leaders. And the part of American science fiction literature which is the most attracting to one is that which objectively works on people's sacred hatred towards war and towards the destruction of cities, countries, peoples. This hatred is awakened in the reader.

The Soviet people think a great deal about Americans. They want more and better to know their aspirations, dreams, anxieties. Fantasy is the reflection of reality, its magic looking glass. Through fantasy Americans may see and understand their reality, may feel the blind alley of the American way of life in which they are existing like a dream in a cage. American science fiction helps one to peep into the thought and life of Americans. A.K.

The Deep Space Scrolls

By ROBERT F. YOUNG

Illustrated by SCHELLING



Robert F. Young, who has so felicitously mined the fields of mythology for sf themes, poses a question about one of our most basic racial memories—and about the nature of our concept of God.

Following is a transcript of the closed hearing conducted June 18, 1969 by the Special Senate Committee to Survey Space Progress. Committee chairman: Senator Larch. Committee members in attendance: Senators Kuell, Nicholson, and Hewlett Witness: Lieutenant Colonel Willard S. Greaves, companion-pilot of the Camaraderie 17.

TRANSCRIPTS:

SEN. LARCH: Before getting down to the business on hand, Colonel Greaves, I would like to congratulate you on behalf of my colleagues and myself on your participation in last week's successful orbital flight of the *Camaraderie 17*. Yours and Commander Perkins' achievement stands out as a glowing landmark on the perilous path which this country is blazing into space. Also, I would like to point out to you that the governing principle behind this committee since its inception one year and three months ago has not been to bury astronauts but to praise them, and that the present investigation is not intended to cast umbrage upon your integrity but to clarify certain aspects of your experience that both we and the public-at-large have found confusing. Now, to proceed: You and Commander Perkins lifted out of New Canaveral in the supercapsule *Camaraderie 17* at 0659 hours on the tenth of June, 1969, and began a three-orbit flight the apogee of which was approximately 1,400 miles, the perigee of which was approximately 1,290 miles, and the purpose of which was to test your reactions to deep space—that is, space beyond the perimeter of the orbital flights thus far undertaken—preparatory to the launching of the first manned moon-vehicle. Is that correct, Colonel Greaves?

LT. COL. GREAVES: That is correct.

SEN. LARCH: Exactly when and where during this three-orbit flight did you and Commander Perkins first sight the ghost ship, colonel?

SEN. HEWLETT: May I interpose a word at this point, Senator Larch?

SEN. LARCH: Please do so, Senator Hewlett.

SEN. HEWLETT: Thank you. It is my opinion, senator, that in referring to the ship boarded by Colonel Greaves as a 'ghost ship' we are lending too large an ear to the somewhat sensational nomenclature with which the press has discolored the incident, and are peradventure implying official sanction to irresponsible reporting. Therefore, I recommend that in the future, or until such time as evidence justifies a more specific appellation, we allude to the

object in question by the designation first accorded it by the officials at New Canaveral: 'Spaceship X'.

SEN. LARCH: Very well, senator. I will repeat the question: Exactly when and where during this three-orbit flight, Colonel Greaves, did you and Commander Perkins first sight Spaceship X?

LT. COL. GREAVES: On the first pass, just after we reported in to central control via the Australian relay station. In accordance with instructions, Perk—Commander Perkins, that is—had taken the capsule off automatic attitude control and begun an experimental series of rolls, pitches, and yaws on manual control. We had no idea of the—of Spaceship X's presence till it appeared suddenly upon the periscope screen. Instantly Perk stabilized the capsule in its present attitude and began making the minute attitudinal adjustments necessary to keep the image on the screen.

SEN. LARCH: What was the position of the ship with relation to the *Camaraderie 17?*

LT. COL. GREAVES: It was about half a mile 'above' and behind us, and slightly to the north of our trajectory. We saw at once that it was gradually overtaking us and that we were gradually rising to meet it.

SEN. LARCH: And the implications of these factors were?—

LT. COL. GREAVES: That Spaceship X was traveling at a greater velocity than the *Camaraderie 17,* and that its orbit considerably exceeded our own. However, owing to the eccentricity of our orbit, the two trajectories were approaching, and would parallel each other before, during, and slightly after apogee, during which time the two spacecraft would be close enough to each other to permit a boarding attempt.

SEN. LARCH: Will you describe Spaceship X for us, Colonel Greaves?

LT. COL. GREAVES: Yes. It was roughly cylindrical in shape, and constructed of a dead-black, nonreflective metal. Only one viewport was visible to us—a small one just aft of the lock—and this viewport proved to be the only one the ship possessed. Perk and I estimated the vessel's length at about five hundred feet, its breadth at about eighty-five feet, and its depth—as I said, it was only roughly cylindrical—at about fifty feet. In view of later developments, I think it safe to say that these estimates were close to being one-hundred percent correct.

SEN. LARCH: Are you positive that they are your original estimates, colonel? Are you certain that you did not revise them in order to substantiate the conclu-

sion you arrived at after boarding the vessel?

LT. COL. GREAVES: Those are our original estimates.

SEN. KUELL: Senator, may I have a word?

SEN. LARCH: Please proceed, Senator Kuell.

SEN. KUELL: Colonel Greaves, I'm sure you realize what a grave bearing yours and Commander Perkins' discovery can have upon religious beliefs throughout the world should the conclusion you arrived at prove to be correct. Therefore, I'm sure that you won't take it amiss if I press this matter of dimensions a bit further. Now a cubit, as all of us present are well aware of, represents the length of the human arm from the end of the middle finger to the elbow—a matter of from eighteen to twenty-two inches. We have, in other words, a variation of five inches. Hence three hundred cubits, broken down into feet, varies from four hundred and fifty feet to five hundred and fifty feet; fifty cubits, broken down into feet, varies from seventy-five feet to ninety-one and one half feet; and thirty cubits, broken down into feet, varies from forty-five feet to fifty-five feet. Now, if we calculate the average of each of these sets of figures, we arrive at the following dimensions: length—five hundred feet; breath—eighty-three and one fourth feet; and depth or height—fifty feet. Does it not strike you as being highly significant, Colonel Greaves, that yours and Commander Perkins' estimates should have thus fortuitously approximated—and two cases actually have coincided with—these figures, and isn't it reasonable to assume that you revised your true original estimates so that they would accord with your subsequent theory as to the nature of Spaceship X, and that the actual dimensions of Spaceship X may be altogether different from those which you ascribe to it?

LT. COL. GREAVES: Again, I can only say that the estimates I gave you were our original estimates. We had no need to revise them and we would not have revised them even if the need had arisen.

SEN. KUELL: Then why weren't they radioed back to central control coincidentally with your announcement that you had sighted —and I use your own words— 'what appears to be a spaceship of stupendous proportions'? Why were they withheld until after you had re-boarded the *Camaraderie 17?*

LT. COL. GREAVES: They were not withheld in the sense that you imply. Perk and I simply decided that it would be better to wait until we approached Spaceship X more closely before radioing in a detailed description, but when the time came, we were so

busy making preparations for boarding that we forgot the matter completely.

SEN. KUELL: Thank you, colonel. Please proceed with your questioning, Senator Larch.

SEN. LARCH: Tell me, Colonel Greaves—why were you and Commander Perkins so determined to board Spaceship X?

LT. COL. GREAVES: Because we knew that this would be our only chance. The difference in the two orbits was such that the forthcoming juxtaposition of the two craft could not occur again for weeks and possibly months and consequently could not occur again at all since our flight was limited to three orbits. In addition, there was the strong possibility that Spaceship X, owing to the nonreflective nature of the metal of which it was constructed, might never be relocated. It had, after all, gone undetected up till now. We felt that the situation had all of the earmarks of a heaven-sent opportunity, and that it would be a shame not to take advantage of it.

SEN. LARCH: Did it not occur to you that the vessel might be an advanced Vostok model of some kind, and that it might be manned?

LT. COL. GREAVES: We knew without even having to discuss the matter that while the Russians would have been capable of building such a ship, launching it with their present boosters would have been out of the question.

SEN. LARCH: But it did occur to you that the vessel might be manned by, shall we say, extraterrestrial intelligences?

LT. COL. GREAVES: Yes it did. As a matter of fact, we were convinced that it must be manned by beings of some sort—until we got close enough to see the meteor holes in the hull. We knew then that while it might once have been manned, it was manned no more—save, perhaps, by dead men. We also knew that in order for it to have suffered that many meteor penetrations, it must have been in space for millennia.

SEN. LARCH: You assumed this latter contingency—isn't that what you mean, colonel? You couldn't possibly have known it for a certainty.

LT. COL. GREAVES: Granted. But later developments bore us out.

SEN. LARCH: Let's get down to those later developments, shall we? Suppose we start from the moment you radioed the news of your discovery back to central control. What did you do then?

LT. COL. GREAVES: We estimated when juxtaposition would occur and how long it would endure, then radioed the information back to central control together with the information that this was the only time during our

flight that it could occur. Finally we requested permission for one of us to board the other craft.

SEN. LARCH: I understand that you stated that in view of the fact that the ship was unmanned and that its attitude was relatively stable, the danger involved would be negligible. Was this entirely true, colonel?

LT. COL. GREAVES: Entirely. As you know, senator, orbital rendezvous have been achieved many times, both by this country and by the Soviet Union, and in several instances actual transference has taken place. The instance in question seems dangerous merely because the rendezvous was fortuitous rather than planned. Fortuitous or not, however, it posed no unusual problems, and there were two possible means of entry virtually staring us in the face.

SEN. LARCH: During your press interview, you referred to one of these entry points as a 'boat bay'. Will you elaborate further?

LT. COL. GREAVES: Yes. It was a large recessed area in the hull where the auxiliary craft used by the passengers and the crew when they disembarked had been moored. A lock gave onto this area, and I was reasonably certain that I could burn my way into the ship with the small acetylene torch that was part of the *Camaraderie 17's* hardware. This seems a rather naive assumption on my part in the light of the analysis of the fragment of metal I brought back, but I had no way of knowing at the time that the hull, however susceptible it might be to meteors, was utterly impervious in a number of other respects. In any event, as matters turned out I didn't have to use the torch, for the boat-bay lock had been improperly sealed by the last person to disembark.

SEN. NICHOLSON: Senator Larch, I would like to have the floor for a few moments.

SEN. LARCH: Very well, Senator Nicholson.

SEN. NICHOLSON: To return to this sample piece of metal you brought back with you, Colonel Greaves: During your press interview you described it as 'a fragment of gopherwood'. In all honesty, colonel, don't you think that this was a rather flippant and ill-considered remark, and that by making it, you lent undue credence to what was—and is—at best, an exceedingly tenuous theory?

LT. COL. GREAVES: I do not consider the remark to have been either flippant or ill-considered. I was asked what I thought the metal was, and I gave an honest answer. Furthermore, my immediate superiors agree with me. Gopherwood has never been identified, and the term could very well refer to the alloy that went

into the construction of Spaceship X.

SEN. NICHOLSON: I shudder to think of the blow our international prestige will receive should the scrolls you brought back with you fail to validate your conclusions. Our space program will become the laughingstock of the entire world. I simply cannot understand why greater secrecy was not employed in this matter.

LT. COL. GREAVES: Too much of the story had already been made public through radio and television coverage to make denying it practicable. In any event, I'm certain that the scrolls will provide the necessary proof. According to Dr. Noyes, they contain similarities to one of the early Mediterranean alphabets, and this certainly suggests that the descendants of whoever wrote them must have had something to do with the development of that alphabet.

SEN. LARCH: Do you have any further questions, Senator Nicholson?

SEN. NICHOLSON: Not for the moment—no.

SEN. LARCH: I will proceed then. You and Commander Perkins are of equal rank, Colonel Greaves. May I ask how you ascertained which of you would do the boarding after authorization to do so came through?

LT. COL. GREAVES: Flipping a coin was out of the question of course, and we had no straws or matches. Finally we agreed that since our wives were of similar build and height, each of us would write down his wife's weight on a slip of paper, and that the one of us whose wife weighed the most would do the boarding. We promised to be completely honest about this. I won by a margin of three pounds.

SEN. LARCH: I see. And have you apprised your wife of this . . . ah . . . *modus operandi?*

LT. COL. GREAVES: As a matter of fact, I have not.

SEN. LARCH: A wise decision indeed. And now, colonel, will you tell us what you did and what you found after boarding Spaceship X?

LT. COL. GREAVES: As I mentioned earlier, the boat-bay lock had been improperly sealed. Consequently I had no trouble opening it. The inner boat-bay lock proved to have been improperly sealed also, and I concluded from this that the action in both cases had been deliberate—that Spaceship X had not only been abandoned, but that it had been abandoned in such a way as to make future use of it impossible. After entering the ship proper, I found myself in a short passageway. I floated along it, pulling myself forward by means of this protuberance and that and propelling myself, whenever possible, by

pushing against the bulkheads with my feet. There was no light save for an occasional ray of starlight seeping through the meteor perforations, and my only effective means of illumination was the electric torch I had brought with me from the *Camaraderie 17*. It left much to be desired. Presently the passageway gave into a large chamber which, judging from its rows of bolted-down benches and its centrally located dais, was a meeting hall of some kind. I did not linger there—Perk and I had estimated that at most I had only fifteen minutes to carry out my explorations—but turned, and proceeded aft, entering another passageway, this one much higher and longer than the first. On either side, compartments were arranged in tiers, and each of the tiers above deck-level was fronted by a catwalk. I entered several of the compartments and looked around, but I saw nothing in each case but a bunk-like bed and a small chest. The beds were bare, and the chests were empty. Continuing on down the passageway, I came to another chamber, this one, judging from its bolted-down tables and benches, and the utensils drifting about, a combination dining room and galley. Again, I did not linger. My primary interest was the power source that had once propelled, illuminated and heated the ship, and had provided it with artificial gravity, and I reasoned that I would find this source in the stern. I was right, but before I located it I came to still another chamber. This one was huge, and it was filled with cages. All of them were empty, but they set me to thinking. For one thing, there were hundreds of them. For another, they ranged in size from tiny to titanic. For another, each of them struck me as having been built to accommodate not one animal, but two or more. I remembered the innumerable meteor penetrations, and the great age they implied. I remembered that in the vacuum and in the absolute zero of space, corrosion and decay are unknown and that under such conditions objects can be preserved for millennia. I remembered the dimensions of the ship. It couldn't be, and yet—

SEN. LARCH: Please confine your account to what you saw and what you did, Colonel Greaves.

LT. COL. GREAVES: Very well. The chamber housing the power source, when I finally located it, proved to be quite small. The source itself was an ion motor. It had been thoroughly and deliberately smashed, and both its condition and its advanced design prevented me from being able to tell very much about it, but I *could* tell, nevertheless, that while it had been capable of pow-

ering the ship in space, it could never have launched the ship from a planet, assuming that said planet's gravity approximated Earth's. Launching a ship the size of that one took some doing, and I take off my hat to the technicians who accomplished it.

SEN. LARCH: They just might have built the ship in space, you know.

LT. COL. GREAVES: I have reason to believe otherwise, but if they had, I'd still take my hat off to them.

SEN. LARCH: All of which indicates, does it not, that we are dealing with a race of people scientifically superior to our own.

LT. COL. GREAVES: It does.

SEN. LARCH: Then, assuming for the moment that your theory is valid, dosen't it strike you as highly improbable that the sole survivors of so scientifically advanced a race would, immediately after landing on Earth, take up primitive husbandry?

LT. COL. GREAVES: No, it does not. I think that in undertaking the voyage to Earth, the passengers and the crew of Spaceship X meant to leave far more behind them than the natural catastrophe—probably a tectonic revolution—that had occasioned their exodus. I think that they meant to leave behind them a way of life which they had come to loathe because it had supplied them with false gods, and I think that once they landed on Earth and dispersed, they threw this way of life over their shoulders and deliberately reverted to the thoughtworld and the religious cosmogony of their remote ancestors. In other words, I think that they used the natural disaster that forced them to migrate to another planet as an excuse to begin all over again, and that they burned their bridges behind them so that they would *have* to begin all over again. Probably they blew up the auxiliary craft, or lifeboat, and every technological gadget it contained the very same day they landed . . . Earth, in those days, must have seemed like a promised land indeed. Green, fertile, relatively unpeopled . . . They had no way of knowing, probably, that intermarriage with the natives would soon decimate their average life-expectancy.

SEN. LARCH: Wouldn't you say that you're indulging in some rather wild surmises, Colonel Greaves?

LT. COL. GREAVES: Not at all. I think that the find I made shortly after returning to the forward part of the ship justifies everything I've said.

SEN. LARCH: You're referring, no doubt, to the 'dove'. Very well —go on, Colonel Greaves.

LT. COL. GREAVES: I had some

five minutes remaining when I got back to the large hall from which I had begun my explorations, and I knew that I would have to hurry if I expected to see the rest of the ship. Crossing the hall, I passed through a wide entrance and found myself at the base of a spiral companionway. I propelled myself up the metal stairs, and a few minutes later, found myself on the bridge. The first object my torch beam picked up was a huge viewscreen. When activated, it must have provided a splendid view of space, but now of course the screen was blank. Next to the screen stood a long desk, and on this desk lay the ship's log—the metallic scrolls which had been left behind (deliberately, I believe) and which are now being deciphered by Dr. Noyes and his staff. In addition to the viewscreen and the desk, the bridge contained a complex sextant, and an instrument panel so intricate that compared to it, our panel on the *Camaraderie 17* seemed like a primitive abacus. To the right of the panel, a doorway opened into another sequence of compartments. As there were only four of them and as they were obviously much more spacious than the previous compartments I had found, I concluded that I had blundered into officers' country. One of the compartments appeared to be considerably larger than the other three, and believing it to be the captain's, I looked into it first. I learned nothing beyond the fact that two people, not one, had occupied it. I found this to be the case with the three remaining compartments, and concluded that the four officers had had their wives with them. Finally I returned to the bridge. I had only two minutes to go now, and I probably would have propelled myself straight back down the companionway (I had already taken possession of the scrolls) if the 'dove' hadn't caught my eye. That's exactly what I thought of when my torch beam picked up the object bracketed to the bulkhead—a dove. A dove in flight. Investigating, I learned that it was a streamlined telescopic camera the lens of which were probably located somewhere in the ventral region of the hull. The 'wings' were merely a device for centering the image and focusing the lens, while the 'body' provided the housing for the automatic developing unit and served as a receptacle for the finished photograph. The final photograph to have been taken and never been removed, and it stood out vividly in the beam of my torch. It was a photograph of an olive grove. By now, my time had just about run out, and I removed the photograph from the 'dove', returned to the boat-bay area, picking up a fragment of meteor-dislodged

metal on my way, and regained the *Camaraderie 17*.

SEN. KUELL: It is imperative that I interpose a few words at this point, Senator Larch.

SEN. LARCH: Please go ahead, Senator Kuell.

SEN. KUELL: Colonel Greaves, I am of course familiar with this photograph you brought back, but, while the general trend of your reasoning is apparent to me, I cannot comprehend how so insignificant a discovery could have set so unorthodox a train of thought in motion. The fact that the photograph depicts an olive grove means absolutely nothing, even when brought into juxtaposition with the concomitant fact that the camera used in taking and developing it was shaped like a dove. How could you possibly have arrived at the conclusion you did?

LT. COL. GREAVES: Because my 'train of thought', as you call it, was already in motion and had been in motion for some time. The camera and the photograph were merely the final clues in a whole series of clues: the ship's dimensions, its obvious age, the cages, the large compartment in the officers' section, and the three smaller ones . . . With the discovery of the camera and the photograph, everything fell into place.

SEN. KUELL: *Everything*, colonel? I can think of any number of details that your theory does not explain. What of Xithuthros, Prithu, and Ut-napishtim? What of Deucalion and Pyrrha? Would you have me believe that *they* were aboard this stream-lined space-scow of yours?

LT. COL. GREAVES: In a sense they were. All versions of the legend are based on handed-down memories of the voyage of Spaceship X from Planet X to Earth, but the concept of space being beyond the scope of primitive minds, the two planets were made into one, and the survivors of the disaster were pictured not as fleeing from one planet to another, but as sweating out the debacle in a craft that never left Earth. The religious cosmogony which the survivors reverted to after spreading out among the early civilized sectors of the world was adapted in various ways, but the most authentic version, I believe, comes down to us through Genesis, since it was in the region that later became known as Judea that the captain of Spaceship X and his three officers settled down.

SEN. KUELL: All of this is pure conjecture, colonel. You haven't so much as a single fact to go on.

LT. COL. GREAVES: You're forgetting—are you not, senator?—that a blow-up of the photograph of the olive grove revealed several pieces of pottery in *good* con-

dition that the experts agreed dated from the late Neolithic Period.

SEN. KUELL; and you're forgetting—are you not, colonel?—that a vast difference exists between an olive *grove* and an olive *leaf*. And how do you explain why these ancient voyageurs of yours brought animals with them? More important, how do you explain what became of these animals? Surely if they had been landed, some evidence of them would remain, and just as surely, that evidence would have come to light by now.

LT. COL. GREAVES: Maybe they were brought along out of compassion. More probably, they were brought along because the survivors were flesh-eaters. In either case, you can be certain that they were transported from the mother-ship to Earth. As to why no evidence of their existence has ever been found, isn't it reasonable to assume that Planet X paralleled Earth in lower, as well as higher, forms of life?

SEN. KUELL: Only if you're trying to shore up a theory that is about to collapse. But it will do you no good, Colonel Greaves: the text of Genesis confutes your entire contention.

LT. COL. GREAVES: On the contrary, the text of Genesis substantiates my contention. Let me quote one or two passages by way of illustration. '—the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened.' This is race memory coming to the fore in the form of an imagery so strong that it survives translation, and with the aid of a little imagination, the passage can be interpreted to mean that all is in readiness for the launching. 'And the waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth: and all the high hills that were under the whole heaven were covered'. If you will substitute 'distances' for 'waters' and 'over' for 'upon', you will obtain a fairly clear mental picture of a planet fading from sight in the viewscreen of a departing spaceship. And how about the 'stories' referred to in the building specification? '—with lower, second, and third stories shalt thou make it'? Those weren't 'stories', senator—they were stages. Rocket stages. The number of rocket stages that would be required to launch a ship the size of Spaceship X into space.

SEN. KUELL: I submit, colonel, that your reasoning is defective. I submit furthermore that it is not the sort of reasoning which normal well-adjusted Americans indulge in, and I hereby recommend to this committee that both yours and Commander Perkins' qualifications be reexamined at the earliest possible opportunity and that both of you be relieved

from duty until such time as it can satisfactorily be proven that both of you have recovered from your hallucinatory experience.

LT. COL. GREAVES: But the scrolls I brought back aren't hallucinatory, senator. Neither is the fragment of—of—yes, of gopherwood. And certainly the photograph is real enough.

SEN. KUELL: Granted. But I have grave doubts about some of the other items you have called to our attention. I'm afraid you're going to be in for a rather rude awakening, Colonel Greaves, when Dr. Noyes and his staff finish deciphering the scrolls. Gopherwood indeed!

SEN. LARCH: Excuse me, senator. I have just been handed a telegram from Dr. Noyes. It—it would appear that they have deciphered the scrolls already. I will read the telegram aloud: 'Deep Space Scrolls prove Spaceship X to be Noah's Ark beyond vestige of a doubt—Noyes'.

An extended silence.

* * *

SEN. NICHOLSON: I hereby resolve that this hearing be adjourned and that a transcript of the proceedings be made public immediately.

SEN. KUELL: Gentlemen, I implore you not to act hastily in this matter. Don't you see that if we accept Dr. Noyes' word as final, we will be obligated to accept as fact that the concept of one God did not originate on Earth, but somewhere out there in the wastes of space? We will be obligated to admit that Earth was not the purpose of all creation, but only a sort of afterthought?

SEN. HEWLETT: Gentlemen, I emphatically disagree. We are now obligated to do what we should have done before: to really accept God as the creator of the universe as we have come to know it. I hereby move that we shed our geocentric cloaks once and for all and start looking upon space not as a bête noir which circumstance and the Soviet Union have forced us to come to grips with but as a great star-flowered sea upon which we should have ventured long ago. That God is far beyond the pale of our picayune conception of Him is a fact that we have known all along but which we have refused to live with because we would have had Him be as small and as petty as we are. Let us resolve from this moment on that when we say 'Almighty' we mean 'Almighty' beyond peradventure of a doubt. Gentlemen, we have roots among the stars! Let us lift off from this dust mote on the doorstep of reality and wing our way into the majestic hall of universe and go asearching for the planet of our birth!

SEN. LARCH: Amen.

END OF TRANSCRIPT

The people of Mars were perverse. They did not want Earth's proffered gift of rich land, much water, new power. They fought Rehabilitation. And with them fought Carey, the Earthman, who wanted only the secret that lay at the end of . . .

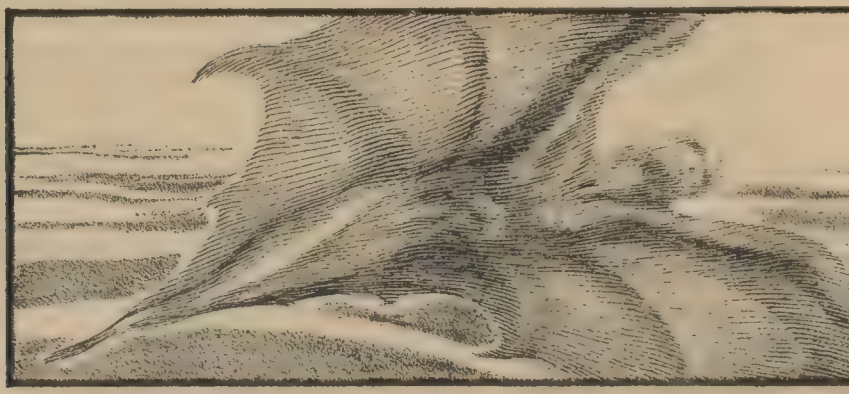
THE ROAD TO SINHARAT

By LEIGH BRACKETT

Illustrated by FINLAY

THE door was low, deep-sunk into the thickness of the wall. Carey knocked and then he waited, stooped a bit under the lintel-stone, fitting his body to the meagre shadow as though he could really hide it there. A few yards away, beyond cracked and tilted paving-blocks, the Jekkara Low-Canal showed its still black water to the still black sky, and both were full of stars.

Nothing moved along the canal-site. The town was closed tight, and this in itself was so unnatural that it made Carey shiver. He had been here before and he knew how it ought to be. The chief industry of the Low-Canal towns is sinning of one



Virgil
Finlay

sort of another, and they work at it right around the clock. One might have thought that all the people had gone away, but Carey knew they hadn't. He knew that he had not taken a single step unwatched. He had not really believed that they would let him come this far, and he wondered why they had not killed him. Perhaps they remembered him.

There was a sound on the other side of the door.

Carey said in the antique High Martian, "Here is one who claims the guest-right." In Low Martian, the vernacular that fitted more easily on his tongue, he said, "Let me in, Derech. You owe me blood."

The door opened narrowly and Carey slid through it, into lamplight and relative warmth. Derech closed the door and barred it, saying,

"Damn you, Carey. I knew you were going to turn up here babbling about blood-debts. I swore I wouldn't let you in."

He was a Low-Canaller, lean and small and dark and predatory. He wore a red jewel in his left ear-lobe and a totally incongruous but comfortable suit of Terran synthetics, insulated against heat and cold. Carey smiled.

"Sixteen years ago," he said, "you'd have perished before you'd have worn that."

"Corruption. Nothing corrupts like comfort, unless it's kindness." Derech sighed. "I knew it was a mistake to let you save my neck that time. Sooner or later you'd claim payment. Well, now that I have let you in, you might as well sit down." He poured wine into a cup of alabaster worn thin as an eggshell and handed it to Carey. They drank, sombrely, in silence. The flickering lamp-light showed the shadows and the deep lines in Carey's face.

Derech said, "How long since you've slept?"

"I can sleep on the way," said Carey, and Derech looked at him with amber eyes as coldly speculative as a cat's.

CAREY did not press him. The room was large, richly furnished with the bare, spare, faded richness of a world that had very little left to give in the way of luxury. Some of the things were fairly new, made in the traditional manner by Martian craftsmen. They were almost indistinguishable from the things that had been old when the Reed Kings and the Bee Kings were little boys along the Nile-bank.

"What will happen," Derech asked, "if they catch you?"

"Oh," said Carey, "they'll deport me first. Then the United Worlds Court will try me, and they can't do anything but find me guilty. They'll hand me over

to Earth for punishment, and there will be further investigations and penalties and fines and I'll be a thoroughly broken man when they've finished, and sorry enough for it. Though I think they'll be sorrier in the long run."

"That won't help matters any," said Derech.

"No."

"Why," asked Derech, "why is it that they will not listen?"

"Because they know that they are right."

Derech said an evil word.

"But they do. I've sabotaged the Rehabilitation Project as much as I possibly could. I've rechanneled funds and misdirected orders so they're almost two years behind schedule. These are the things they'll try me for. But my real crime is that I have questioned Goodness and the works thereof. Murder they might forgive me, but not that."

He added wearily, "You'll have to decide quickly. The UW boys are working closely with the Council of City-States, and Jekkara is no longer untouchable. It's also the first place they'll look for me."

"I wondered if that had occurred to you." Derech frowned. "That doesn't bother me. What does bother me is that I know where you want to go. We tried it once, remember? We ran for our lives across that damned desert. Four solid days and nights." He shivered.

"Send me as far as Barrakesh. I can disappear there, join a southbound caravan. I intend to go alone."

"If you intend to kill yourself, why not do it here in comfort and among friends? Let me think," Derech said. "Let me count my years and my treasure and weigh them against a probable yard of sand."

Flames hissed softly around the coals in the brazier. Outside, the wind got up and started its ancient work, rubbing the house walls with tiny grains of dust, rounding off the corners, hollowing the window places. All over Mars the wind did this, to huts and palaces, to mountains and the small burrow-heaps of animals, laboring patiently toward a city when the whole face of the planet should be one smooth level sea of dust. Only lately new structures of metal and plastic had appeared beside some of the old stone cities. They resisted the wearing sand. They seemed prepared to stay forever. And Carey fancied that he could hear the old wind laughing as it went.

THERE was a scratching against the closed shutter in the back wall, followed by a rapid drumming of fingertips. Derech rose, his face suddenly alert. He rapped twice on the shutter to

say that he understood and then turned to Carey. "Finish your wine."

He took the cup and went into another room with it. Carey stood up. Mingling with the sound of the wind outside, the gentle throb of motors became audible, low in the sky and very near.

Derech returned and gave Carey a shove toward an inner wall. Carey remembered the pivoted stone that was there, and the space behind it. He crawled through the opening. "Don't sneeze or thrash about," said Derech. "The stonework is loose, and they'd hear you."

He swung the stone shut. Carey huddled as comfortably as possible in the uneven hole, worn smooth with the hiding of illegal things for countless generations. Air and a few faint gleams of light seeped through between the stone blocks, which were set without mortar as in most Martian construction. He could even see a thin vertical segment of the room.

When the sharp knock came at the door, he discovered that he could hear quite clearly.

Derech moved across his field of vision. The door opened. A man's voice demanded entrance in the name of the United Worlds and the Council of Martian City-States.

"Please enter," said Derech.

Carey saw, more or less fragmentarily, four men. Three were Martians in the undistinguished cosmopolitan garb of the City-States. They were the equivalent of the FBI. The fourth was an Earthman, and Carey smiled to see the measure of his own importance. The spare, blond, good-looking man with the sunburn and the friendly blue eyes might have been an actor, a tennis-player, or a junior executive on holiday. He was Howard Wales, Earth's best man in Interpol.

Wales let the Martians do the talking, and while they did it he drifted unobtrusively about, peering through doorways, listening, touching, *feeling*. Carey became fascinated by him, in an unpleasant sort of way. Once he came and stood directly in front of Carey's crevice in the wall. Carey was afraid to breathe, and he had a dreadful notion that Wales would suddenly turn about and look straight in at him through the crack.

The senior Martian, a middle-aged man with an able look about him, was giving Derech a briefing on the penalties that awaited him if he harbored a fugitive or withheld information. Carey thought that he was being too heavy about it. Even five years ago he would not have dared to show his face in Jekkara. He could picture Derech listening amiably, lounging

against something and playing with the jewel in his ear. Finally Derech got bored with it and said without heat,

"Because of our geographical position, we have been exposed to the New Culture." The capitals were his. "We have made adjustments to it. But this is still Jekkara and you're here on sufference, no more. Please don't forget it."

Wales spoke, deftly forestalling any comment from the City-Stater. "You've been Carey's friend for many years, haven't you?"

"We robbed tombs together in the old days."

"'Archeological research' is a nicer term, I should think."

"My very ancient and perfectly honorable guild never used it. But I'm an honest trader now, and Carey doesn't come here."

He might have added a qualifying "often," but he did not.

The City-Stater said derisively, "He has or will come here now."

"Why?" asked Derech.

"He needs help. Where else could he go for it?"

"Anywhere. He has many friends. And he knows Mars better than most Martians, probably a damn sight better than you do."

"But," said Wales quietly, "outside of the City-States all Earthmen are being hunted down like rabbits, if they're foolish enough to stay. For Carey's sake, if you know where he is, tell us. Otherwise he is almost certain to die."

"He's a grown man," Derech said. "He must carry his own load."

"HE'S carrying too much . . ." Wales said, and then broke off. There was a sudden gabble of talk, both in the room and outside. Everybody moved toward the door, out of Cary's vision, except Derech who moved into it, relaxed and languid and infuriatingly self-assured. Carey could not hear the sound that had drawn the others but he judged that another flier was landing. In a few minutes Wales and the others came back, and now there were some new people with them. Carey squirmed and craned, getting closer to the crack, and he saw Alan Woodthorpe, his superior, Administrator of the Rehabilitation Project for Mars, and probably the most influential man on the planet. Carey knew that he must have rushed across a thousand miles of desert from his headquarters at Kahora, just to be here at this moment.

Carey was flattered and deeply moved.

Woodthorpe introduced himself to Derech. He was disarmingly simple and friendly in his approach, a man driven and

wearied by many vital matters but never forgetting to be warm, gracious, and human. And the devil of it was that he was exactly what he appeared to be. That was what made dealing with him so impossibly difficult.

Derech said, smiling a little, "Don't stray away from your guards."

"Why is it?" Woodthorpe asked. "Why this hostility? If only your people would understand that we're trying to help them."

"They understand that perfectly," Derech said. "What they can't understand is why, when they have thanked you politely and explained that they neither need nor want your help, you still refuse to leave them alone."

"Because we know what we can do for them! They're destitute now. We can make them rich, in water, in arable land, in power—we can change their whole way of life. Primitive people are notoriously resistant to change, but in time they'll realize . . ."

"Primitive?" said Derech.

"Oh, not the Low-Canallers," said Woodthorpe quickly. "Your civilization was flourishing, I know, when Proconsul was still wondering whether or not to climb down out of his tree. For that very reason I cannot understand why you side with the Drylanders."

Derech said, "Mars is an old, cranky, dried-up world, but we understand her. We've made a bargain with her. We don't ask too much of her, and she gives us sufficient for our needs. We can depend on her. We do not want to be made dependent on other men."

"But this is a new age," said Woodthorpe. "Advanced technology makes anything possible. The old prejudices, the parochial viewpoints, are no longer . . ."

"You were saying something about primitives."

"I was thinking of the Dryland tribes. We had counted on Dr. Carey, because of his unique knowledge, to help them understand us. Instead, he seems bent on stirring them up to war. Our survey parties have been set upon with the most shocking violence. If Carey succeeds in reaching the Drylands there's no telling what he may do. Surely you don't want . . ."

"Primitive," Derech said, with a ring of cruel impatience in his voice. "Parochial. The gods send me a wicked man before a well-meaning fool. Mr. Woodthorpe, the Drylanders do not need Dr. Carey to stir them up to war. Neither do we. We do not want our wells and our water-courses rearranged. We do not want to be resettled. We do not want our population expanded. We do not want the resources that will last

us for thousands of years yet, if they're not tampered with, pumped out and used up in a few centuries. We are in balance with our environment, we want to stay that way. And we will fight, Mr. Woodthorpe. You're not dealing with theories now. You're dealing with our lives. We are not going to place them in your hands."

He turned to Wales and the Martians. "Search the house. If you want to search the town, that's up to you. But I wouldn't be too long about any of it."

LOOKING pained and hurt, Woodthorpe stood for a moment and then went out, shaking his head. The Martians began to go through the house. Carey heard Derech's voice say, "Why don't you join them, Mr. Wales?"

Wales answered pleasantly, "I don't like wasting my time." He bade Derech good night and left, and Carey was thankful.

After a while the Martians left too. Derech bolted the door and sat down again to drink his interrupted glass of wine. He made no move to let Carey out, and Carey conquered a very strong desire to yell at him. He was getting just a touch claustrophobic now. Derech sipped his wine slowly, emptied the cup and filled it again. When it was half empty for the second time a girl came in from the back.

She wore the traditional dress of the Low-Canals, which Carey was glad to see because some of the women were changing it for the cosmopolitan and featureless styles that made all women look alike, and he thought the old style was charming. Her skirt was a length of heavy orange silk caught at the waist with a broad girdle. Above that she wore nothing but a necklace and her body was slim and graceful as a bending reed. Twisted around her ankles and braided in her dark hair were strings of tiny bells, so that she chimed as she walked with a faint elfin music, very sweet and wicked.

"They're all gone now," she told Derech, and Derech rose and came quickly toward Carey's hiding place.

"Someone was watching through the chinks in the shutters," he said as he helped Carey out. "Hoping I'd betray myself when I thought they were gone." He asked the girl, "It wasn't the Earthman, was it?"

"No." She had poured herself some wine and curled up with it in the silks and warm furs that covered the guest-bench on the west wall. Carey saw that her eyes were green as emerald, slightly tilted, bright, curious and without mercy. He became suddenly very conscious of his unshaven chin and the gray that was beginning to be noticeable at

his temples, and his general soiled and weary condition.

"I don't like that man Wales," Derech was saying. "He's almost as good as I am. We'll have him to reckon with yet."

"We," said Carey. "You've weighed your yard of sand?"

Derech shrugged ruefully. "You must have heard me talking myself into it. Well, I've been getting a little bored with the peaceful life." He smiled, the smile Carey remembered from the times they had gone robbing tombs together in places where murder would have been a safer occupation. "And it's always irked me that we were stopped that time. I'd like to try again. By the way, this is Arrin. She'll be going with us as far as Barrakesh."

"Oh." Carey bowed, and she smiled at him from her nest in the soft furs. Then she looked at Derech. "What is there beyond Barrakesh?"

"Kesh," said Derech. "And Shun."

"But you don't trade in the Drylands," she said impatiently. "And if you did, why should I be left behind?"

"We're going to Sinharat," Derech said. "The Ever-living."

"Sinharat?" Arrin whispered. There was a long silence, and then she turned her gaze on Carey. "If I had known that, I would have told them where you were. I would have let them take you." She shivered and bent her head.

"That would have been foolish," Derech said, fondling her. "You'd have thrown away your chance to be the lady of one of the two saviors of Mars."

"If you live," she said.

"But my dear child," said Derech, "can you, sitting there, guarantee to me that you will be alive tomorrow?"

"You will have to admit," said Carey slowly, "that her odds are somewhat better than ours."

II

THE barge was long and narrow, buoyed on pontoon-like floats so that it rode high even with a full cargo. Pontoons, hull, and deck were metal. There had not been any trees for shipbuilding for a very long time. In the center of the deck was a low cabin where several people might sleep, and forward toward the blunt bow was a fire-pit where the cooking was done. The motive power was animal, four of the scaly-hided, bad-tempered, hissing beasts of Martian burden plodding along the canal bank with a tow-cable.

The pace was slow. Carey had wanted to go across country direct to Barrakesh, but Derech had forbidden it.

"I can't take a caravan. All my business goes by the canal,

and everyone knows it. So you and I would have to go alone, riding by night and hiding by day, and saving no time at all." He jabbed his thumb at the sky. "Wales will come when you least expect him and least want him. On the barge you'll have a place to hide, and I'll have enough men to discourage him if he should be rash enough to interfere with a trader going about his normal and lawful business."

"He wouldn't be above it," Carey said gloomily.

"But only when he's desperate. That will be later."

So the barge went gliding gently on its way southward along the thread of dark water that was the last open artery of what had once been an ocean. It ran snow-water now, melt from the polar cap. There were villages beside the canal, and areas of cultivation where long fields showed a startling green against the reddish-yellow desolation. Again there were places where the sand had moved like an army, overwhelming the fields and occupying the houses, so that only mounded heaps would show where a village had been. There were bridges, some of them sound and serving the living, others springing out of nowhere and standing like broken rainbows against the sky. By day there was the stinging sunlight that hid nothing, and by night the two moons laid a shifting loveliness on the land. And if Carey had not been goaded by a terrible impatience he would have been happy.

But all this, if Woodthorpe and the Rehabilitation Project had their way, would go. The waters of the canals would be impounded behind great dams far to the north, and the sparse populations would be moved and settled on new land. Deep-pumping operations, tapping the underground sources that fed the wells, would make up the winter deficit when the cap was frozen. The desert would be transformed, for a space anyway, into a flowering garden. Who would not prefer it to this bitter marginal existence? Who could deny that this was Bad and the Rehabilitation Project Good? No one but the people and Dr. Matthew Carey. And no one would listen to them.

At Sinharat lay the only possible hope of making them listen.

THE sky remained empty. Arrin spent most of her time on deck, sitting among the heaped-up bales. Carey knew that she watched him a great deal but he was not flattered. He thought that she hated him because he was putting Derech in danger of his life. He wished that Derech had left her behind.

On the fourth day at dawn the

wind dropped to a flat calm. The sun burned hot, setting sand and rock to shimmering. The water of the canal showed a surface like polished glass, and in the east the sharp line of the horizon thickened and blurred and was lost in a yellow haze. Derech stood sniffing like a hound at the still air, and around noon he gave the order to tie up. The crew, ten of them, ceased to lounge on the bales and got to work, driving steel anchor pins for the cables, rigging a shelter for the beasts, checking the lashings of the deck cargo. Carey and Derech worked beside them, and when he looked up briefly from his labors Carey saw Arrin crouched over the fire-pit in the midst of a great smoke, cooking furiously. The eastern sky became a wall, a wave curling toward the zenith, sooty ochre below, a blazing brass-color at its crest. It rushed across the land, roared, and broke upon them.

They helped each other to the cabin and crouched knee to knee in the tight space, the twelve men and Arrin, while the barge kicked and rolled, sank down deep and shot upward, struggling like a live thing under the blows of the wind. Dust and sand sifted through every vent-hole, tainting the air with a bitter taste. There was a sulphurous darkness, and the ear was deafened. Carey had been through sand-storms before, and he wished that he was out in the open where he was used to it, and where he did not have to worry about the barge turning turtle and drowning him idiotically on the dryest world in the System. And while all this was going on, Arrin was grimly guarding her pot.

The wind stopped its wild gusting and settled to a steady gale. When it appeared that the barge was going to remain upright after all, the men ate from Arrin's pot and were glad of the food. After that most of them went down into the hold to sleep because there was more room there. Arrin put the lid back on the pot and weighted it to keep the sand out, and then she said quietly to Derech,

"Why is it that you have to go —where you're going?"

"Because Dr. Carey believes that there are records there that may convince the Rehabilitation people that our "primitives" know what they are talking about."

Carey could not see her face clearly in the gloom, but he thought she was frowning, thinking hard.

"You believe," she said to Carey. "Do you know?"

"I know that there were records, once. They're referred to in other records. Whether they still exist or not is another matter.

But because of the peculiar nature of the place, and of the people who made them, I think it is possible."

He could feel her shiver. "But the Ramas were so long ago."

SHE barely whispered the name. It meant Immortal, and it had been a word of terror for so long that no amount of time could erase the memory. The Ramas had achieved their immortality by a system of induction that might have been liked to the pouring of old wine into new bottles, and though the principle behind the transplanting of a consciousness from one host to another was purely scientific, the reactions of the people from among whom they requisitioned their supply of hosts was one of simple emotional horror. The Ramas were regarded as vampires. Their ancient island city of Sinharat lay far and forgotten now in the remotest desolation of Shun, and the Drylanders held it holy, and forbidden. They had broken their own tabu just once, when Kynon of Shun raised his banner, claiming to have rediscovered the lost secret of the Ramas and promising the tribesmen and the Low-Canallers both eternal life and all the plunder they could carry. He had given them only death and since then the tabu was more fanatically enforced than ever.

"Their city has not been looted," Carey said. "That is why I have hope."

"But," said Arrin, "they weren't human. They were only evil."

"On the contrary. They were completely human. And at one time they made a very great effort to atone."

She turned again to Derech. "The Shunni will kill you."

"That is perfectly possible."

"But you must go." She added shrewdly, "If only to see whether you can."

Derech laughed. "Yes."

"Then I'll go with you. I'd rather see what happens to you than wait and wait and never know." As though that settled it, she curled up in her bunk and went to sleep.

Carey slept too, uneasily, dreaming shadowed dreams of Sinharat and waking from them in the dusty claustrophobic dark to feel hopelessly that he would never see it.

By mid-morning the storm had blown itself out, but now there was a sandbar forty feet long blocking the channel. The beasts were hitched to scoops brought up from the hold and put to dredging, and every man aboard stripped and went in with a shovel.

Carey dug in the wet sand, his taller stature and lighter skin perfectly separating him from

the smaller, darker Low-Canallers. He felt obvious and naked, and he kept a wary eye cocked toward the heavens. Once he got among the Drylanders, Wales would have to look very hard indeed to spot him. At Valkis, where there was some trade with the desert men, Derech would be able to get him the proper clothing and Carey would arrive at the Gateway, Barrakesh, already in the guise of a wandering tribesman. Until then he would have to be careful, both of Wales and the local canal-dwellers, who had very little to choose between Earthmen and the Drylanders who occasionally raided this far north, stripping their fields and stealing their women.

In spite of Carey's watchfulness, it was Derech who gave the alarm. About the middle of the afternoon he suddenly shouted Carey's name. Carey, laboring now in a haze of sweat and weariness, looked up and saw Derech pointing at the sky. Carey dropped his shovel and dived for the water.

THE barge was close by, but the flier came so fast that by the time he had reached the ladder he knew he could not possibly climb aboard without being seen. Arrin's voice said calmly from overhead,

"Dive under. There's room."

Carey caught a breath and dived. The water was cold, and the sunlight slanting through it showed it thick and roiled from the storm. The shadow of the barge made a total darkness into which Carey plunged. When he thought he was clear of the broad pontoons he surfaced, hoping Arrin had told the truth. She had. There was space to breathe, and between the pontoons he could watch the flier come in low and hover on its rotors above the canal, watching. Then it landed. There were several men in it, but only Howard Wales got out.

Derech went to talk to him. The rest of the men kept on working, and Carey saw that the extra shovel had vanished into the water. Wales kept looking at the barge. Derech was playing with him, and Carey cursed. The icy chill of the water was biting him to the bone. Finally, to Wales' evident surprise, Derech invited him aboard. Carey swam carefully back and forth in the dark space under the hull, trying to keep his blood moving. After a long long time, a year or two, he saw Wales walking back to the flier. It seemed another year before the flier took off. Carey fought his way out from under the barge and into the sunlight again, but he was too stiff and numb to climb the ladder. Arrin and Derech had to pull him up.

"Anyone else," said Derech, "would be convinced. But this one—he gives his opponent credit for all the brains and deceitfulness he needs."

He poured liquor between Carey's chattering teeth and wrapped him in thick blankets and put him in a bunk. Then he said, "Could Wales have any way of guessing where we're going?"

Carey frowned. "I suppose he could, if he bothered to go through all my monographs and papers."

"I'm sure he's bothered."

"It's all there," Carey said dismally. "How we tried it once and failed—and what I hoped to find, though the Rehabilitation Act hadn't come along then, and it was pure archaeological interest. And I have, I know, mentioned the Ramas to Woodthorpe when I was arguing with him about the advisability of all these earth-shattering—mars-shattering—changes. Why? Did Wales say something?"

"He said, 'Barrakesh will tell the story.' "

"He did, did he?" said Carey viciously. "Give me the bottle." He took a long pull and the liquor went into him like fire into glacial ice. "I wish to heaven I'd been able to steal a flier."

Derech shook his head. "You're lucky you didn't. They'd have had you out of the sky in an hour."

"Of course you're right. It's just that I'm in a hurry." He drank again and then he smiled, a very unscholarly smile. "If the gods are good to me, someday I'll have Mr. Wales between my hands."

THE local men came along that evening, about a hundred of them with teams and implements. They had already worked all day clearing other blocks, but they worked without question all that night and into the next day, each man choosing his own time to fall out and sleep when he could no longer stand up. The canal was their life, and their law said that the canal came first, before wife, child, brother, parent, or self, and it was a hanging matter. Carey stayed out of sight in the cabin, feeling guilty about not helping but not too guilty. It was backbreaking work. They had the channel clear by the middle of the morning, and the barge moved on southward.

Three days later a line of cliffs appeared in the east, far away at first but closing gradually until they marched beside the canal. They were high and steep, colored softly in shades of red and gold. The faces of the rock were fantastically eroded by a million years of water and ten millennia of wind. These were the rim of the sea-basin, and pres-

ently Carey saw in the distance ahead a shimmering line of mist on the desert where another canal cut through it. They were approaching Valkis.

It was sunset when they reached it. The low light struck in level shafts against the cliffs. Where the angle was right, it shone through the empty doors and window holes of the five cities that sprawled downward over the ledges of red-gold rock. It seemed as though hearthfires burned there, and warm lamplight to welcome home men weary from the sea. But in the streets and squares and on the long flights of rock-cut steps only slow shadows moved with the sinking sun. The ancient quays stood stark as tombstones, marking the levels where new harbors had been built and then abandoned as the water left them, and the high towers that had flown the banners of the Sea-Kings were bare and broken.

Only the lowest city lived, and only a part of that, but it lived fiercely, defiant of the cold centuries towering over it. From the barge deck Carey watched the torches flare out like yellow stars in the twilight, and he heard voices, and the wild and lovely music of the double-banked harps. The dry wind had a smell in it of dusty spices and strange exotic things. The New Culture had not penetrated here, and Carey was glad, though he did think that Valkis could stand being cleaned up just a little without hurting it any. They had two or three vices for sale there that were quite unbelievable.

"Stay out of sight," Derech told him, "till I get back."

It was full dark when they reached their mooring, at an ancient stone dock beside a broad square with worn old buildings on three sides of it. Derech went into the town and so did the crew, but for different reasons. Arrin stayed on deck, lying on the bales with her chin on her wrists, staring at the lights and listening to the noises like a sulky child forbidden to play some dangerous but fascinating game. Derech did not allow her in the streets alone.

Out of sheer boredom, Carey went to sleep.

He did not know how long he had slept, a few minutes or a few hours, when he was wakened sharply by Arrin's wildcat scream.

III

THERE were men on the deck outside. Carey could hear them scrambling around and cursing the woman, and someone was saying something about an Earthman. He rolled out of his bunk. He was still wearing the Earth-made coverall that was all

Virgil
Finlay

the clothing he had until Derech came back. He stripped it off in a wild panic and shoved it far down under the tumbled furs. Arrin did not scream again but he thought he could hear muffled sounds as though she was trying to. He shivered, naked in the chill dark.

Footsteps came light and swift across the deck. Carey reached out and lifted from its place on the cabin wall a long-handled axe that was used to cut loose the deck cargo lashings in case of emergency. And as though the axe had spoken to him, Carey knew what he was going to do.

The shapes of men appeared in the doorway, dark and huddled against the glow of the deck lights.

Carey gave a Dryland war-cry that split the night. He leaped forward, swinging the axe.

The men disappeared out of the doorway as though they had been jerked on strings. Carey emerged from the cabin onto the deck, where the torchlight showed him clearly, and he whirled the axe around his head as he had learned to do years ago when he first understood both the possibility and the immense value of being able to go Martian. Inevitably he had got himself embroiled in unscholarly, unarcheological matters like tribal wars and raiding, and he had acquired some odd skills. Now he drove the dark, small, startled men ahead of the axe-blade. Yelling, he drove them over the low rail and onto the dock, and he stood above them in the torchlight while they stared at him, five astonished men with silver rings in their ears and very sharp knives in their belts.

Carey quoted some Dryland sayings about Low-Canallers that brought the blood flushing into their cheeks. Then he asked them what their business was.

One of them, who wore a kilt of vivid yellow, said, "We were told there was an Earthman hiding."

And who told you? Carey wondered. Mr. Wales, through some Martian spy? Of course, Mr. Wales—who else? He was beginning to hate Mr. Wales. But he laughed and said, "Do I look like an Earthman?"

He made the axe-blade flicker in the light. He had let his hair grow long and ragged, and it was a good desert color, tawny brown. His naked body was lean and long-muscled like a desert man's, and he had kept it hard. Arrin came up to him rubbing her bruised mouth and staring at him as surprised as the Valkisians.

The man in the yellow kilt said again, "We were told . . ."

Other people had begun to gather in the dockside square,

both men and women, idle, curious, and cruel.

"My name is Marah," Carey said. "I left the Wells of Tamboina with a price on my head for murder." The Wells were far enough away that he need not fear a fellow-tribesman rising to dispute his story. "Does anybody here want to collect it?"

THE people watched him. The torch-flames blew in the dry wind, scattering the light across their upturned faces. Carey began to be afraid.

Close beside him Arrin whispered, "Will you be recognized?"

"No." He had been here three times with Dryland bands but it was hardly likely that anyone would remember one specific tribesman out of the numbers that floated through.

"Then stand steady," Arrin said.

He stood. The people watched him, whispering and smiling among themselves. Then the man in the yellow kilt said,

"Earthman or Drylander, I don't like your face."

The crowd laughed, and a forward movement began. Carey could hear the sweet small chiming of the bells the women wore. He gripped the axe and told Arrin to get away from him. "If you know where Derech's gone, go after him. I'll hold them as long as I can."

He did not know whether she left him or not. He was watching the crowd, seeing the sharp blades flash. It seemed ridiculous, in this age of space flight and atomic power, to be fighting with axe and knife. But Mars had had nothing better for a long time, and the UW Peace and Disarmament people hoped to take even those away from them some day. On Earth, Carey remembered, there were still peoples who hardened their wooden spears in the fire and ate their enemies. The knives, in any case, could kill efficiently enough. He stepped back a little from the rail to give the axe free play, and he was not cold any longer, but warm with a heat that stung his nerve-ends.

Derech's voice shouted across the square.

The crowd paused. Carey could see over their heads to where Derech, with about half his crew around him, was forcing his way through. He looked and sounded furious.

"I'll kill the first man that touches him!" he yelled.

The man in the yellow kilt asked politely, "What is he to you?"

"He's money, you fool! Passage money that I won't collect till I reach Barrakesh, and not then unless he's alive and able to get it for me. And if he doesn't, I'll see to him myself." Derech

sprang up onto the barge deck. "Now clear off. Or you'll have more killing to do than you'll take pleasure in."

His men were lined up with him now along the rail, and the rest of the crew were coming. Twelve tough armed men did not look like much fun. The crowd began to drift away, and the original five went reluctantly with them. Derech posted a watch and took Carey into the cabin.

"Get into these," he said, throwing down a bundle he had taken from one of the men. Carey laid aside his axe. He was shaking now with relief and his fingers stumbled over the knots. The outer wrapping was a thick desert cloak. Inside was a leather kilt, well worn and adorned with clanking bronze bosses, a wide bronze collar for the neck and a leather harness for weapons that was black with use.

"They came off a dead man," Derech said. "There are sandals underneath." He took a long desert knife from his girdle and tossed it to Carey. "And this. And now, my friend, we are in trouble."

"I thought I did rather well," Carey said, buckling kilt and harness. They felt good. Perhaps some day, if he lived, he would settle down to being the good gray Dr. Carey, archeologist emeritus, but the day was not yet. "Someone told them there was an Earthman here."

DERECH nodded. "I have friends here, men who trust me, men I trust. They warned me. That's why I routed my crew out of the brothels, and unhappy they were about it, too."

Carey laughed. "I'm grateful to them." Arrin had come in and was sitting on the edge of her bunk, watching Carey. He swung the cloak around him and hooked the bronze catch at the throat. The rough warmth of the cloth was welcome. "Wales will know now that I'm with you. This was his way of finding out for sure."

"You might have been killed," Arrin said.

Carey shrugged. "It wouldn't be a calamity. They'd rather have me dead than lose me, though of course none of them would dream of saying so. Point is, he won't be fooled by the masquerade, and he won't wait for Barrakesh. He'll be on board as soon as you're well clear of Valkis and he'll have enough force with him to make it good."

"All true," said Derech. "So. Let him have the barge." He turned to Arrin. "If you're still hell-bent to come with us, get ready. And remember, you'll be riding for a long time."

To Carey he said, "Better keep clear of the town. I'll have mounts and supplies by the time

Phobos rises. Where shall we meet?"

"By the lighthouse," Carey said. Derech nodded and went out. Carey went out too and waited on the deck while Arrin changed her clothes. A few minutes later she joined him, wrapped in a long cloak. She had taken the bells from her hair and around her ankles, and she moved quietly now, light and lithe as a boy. She grinned at him. "Come, desert man. What did you say your name was?"

"Marah."

"Don't forget your axe."

They left the barge. Only one torch burned now on the deck. Some of the lights had died around the square. This was deserted, but there was still sound and movement in plenty along the streets that led into it. Carey guided Arrin to the left along the canal bank. He did not see anyone watching them, or following them. The sounds and the lights grew fainter. The buildings they passed now were empty, their doors and windows open to the wind. Deimos was in the sky, and some of the roofs showed moonlight through them, shafts of pale silver touching the drifted dust that covered the floors. Carey stopped several times to listen, but he heard nothing except the wind. He began to feel better. He hurried Arrin with long strides, and now they moved away from the canal and up a broken street that led toward the cliffs.

THE street became a flight of steps cut in the rock. There were roofless stone houses on either side, clinging to the cliffs row on ragged row like the abandoned nests of sea-birds. Carey's imagination, as always, peopled them, hung them with nets and gear, livened them with lights and voices and appropriate smells. At the top of the steps he paused to let Arrin get her breath, and he looked down across the centuries at the torches of Valkis burning by the canal.

"What are you thinking?" Arrin asked.

"I'm thinking that nothing, not people nor oceans, should ever die."

"The Ramas lived forever."

"Too long, anyway. And that wasn't good, I know. But still it makes me sad to think of men building these houses and working and raising their families, looking forward to the future."

"You're an odd one," Arrin said. "When I first met you I couldn't understand what it was that made Derech love you. You were so—quiet. Tonight I could see. But now you've gone all broody and soft again. Why do you care so much about dust and old bones?"

"Curiosity. I'll never know the end of the story, but I can at least know the beginning."

They moved on again, and now they were walking across the basin of a harbor, with the great stone quays towering above them, gnawed and rounded by the wind. Ahead on a crumbling promontory the shaft of a broken tower pointed skyward. They came beneath it, where ships had used to come, and presently Carey heard the jingling and padding of animals coming toward them. Before the rise of Phobos they were mounted and on their way.

"This is your territory," said Derech. "I will merely ride."

"Then you and Arrin can handle the pack animals." Carey took the lead. They left the city behind, climbing to the top of the cliffs. The canal showed like a ribbon of steel in the moonlight far below, and then was gone. A range of mountains had come down here to the sea, forming a long curving peninsula. Only their bare bones were left, and through that skeletal mass of rock Carey took his little band by a trail he had followed once and hoped that he remembered.

They travelled all that way by night, lying in the shelter of the rocks by day, and three times a flier passed over them like a wheeling hawk, searching. Carey thought more than once that he had lost the way, though he never said so, and he was pleasantly surprised when they found the sea-bottom again just where it should be on the other side of the range, with the ford he remembered across the canal. They crossed it by moonlight, stopping only to fill up their water bags. At dawn they were on a ridge above Barrakesh.

They looked down, and Derech said, "I think we can forget our southbound caravan."

Trade was for times of peace, and now the men of Kesh and Shun were gathering for war, even as Derech had said, without need of any Dr. Carey to stir them to it.

They filled the streets. They filled the *serais*. They camped in masses by the gates and along the banks of the canal and around the swampy lake that was its terminus. The vast herds of animals broke down the dikes, trampled the irrigation ditches and devoured the fields. And across the desert more riders were coming, long files of them with pennons waving and lances glinting in the morning light. Wild and far away, Carey heard the skirling of the desert pipes.

"The minute we go down there," he said, "we are part of the army. Any man that turns his back on Barrakesh now will get a spear through it for cowardice."

HIS face became hard and cruel with a great rage. Presently this horde would roll northward, sweeping up more men from the Low-Canal towns as it passed, joining ultimately with other hordes pouring in through the easterly gates of the Drylands. The people of the City-States would fall like butchered sheep, and perhaps even the dome of Kahora would come shattering down. But sooner or later the guns would be brought up, and then the Drylanders would do the falling, all because of good men like Woodthorpe who only wanted to help.

Carey said, "I am going to Sinharat. But you know how much chance a small party has, away from the caravan track and the wells."

"I know," said Derech.

"You know how much chance we have of evading Wales, without the protection of a caravan."

"You tell me how I can go quietly home, and I'll do it."

"You can wait for your barge and go back to Valkis."

"I couldn't do that," Derech said seriously. "My men would laugh at me. I suggest we stop wasting time. Here in the desert, time is water."

"Speaking of water," Arrin said, "how about when we get there? And how about getting back?"

Derech said, "Dr. Carey has heard that there is a splendid well at Sinharat."

"He's heard," said Arrin, "but he doesn't know. Same as the records." She gave Carey a look, only half scornful.

Carey smiled briefly. "The well I have on pretty good authority. It's in the coral deep under the city, so it can be used without actually breaking the tabu. The Shunni don't go near it unless they're desperate, but I talked to a man who had."

He led them down off the ridge and away from Barrakesh. And Derech cast an uneasy glance at the sky.

"I hope Wales did set a trap for us there. And I hope he'll sit a while waiting for us to spring it."

There was a strict law against the use of fliers over tribal lands without special permission, which would be unprocurable now. But they both knew that Wales would not let that stop him.

"The time could come," Carey said grimly, "that we'd be glad to see him."

He led them a long circle northward to avoid the war parties coming in to Barrakesh. Then he struck out across the deadly waste of the sea-bottom, straight for Sinharat.

HE lost track of time very quickly. The days blurred

together into one endless hell wherein they three and the staggering animals toiled across vast slopes of rock up-tilted to the sun, or crept under reefs of rotten coral with sand around them as smooth and bright as a burning-glass. At night there was moonlight and bitter cold, but the cold did nothing to alleviate their thirst. There was only one good thing about the journey, and that was the thing that worried Carey the most. In all that cruel and empty sky, no flier ever appeared.

"The desert is a big place," Arrin said, looking at it with loathing. "Perhaps he couldn't find us. Perhaps he's given up."

"Not him," said Carey.

Derech said, "Maybe he thinks we're dead anyway, and why bother."

Maybe, Carey thought. Maybe. But sometimes as he rode or walked he would curse at Wales out loud and glare at the sky, demanding to know what he was up to. There was never any answer.

The last carefully-hoarded drop of water went. And Carey forgot about Wales and thought only of the well of Sinharat, cold and clear in the coral.

He was thinking of it as he plodded along, leading the beast that was now almost as weak as he. The vision of the well so occupied him that it was some little time before the message from his bleared and sun-struck eyes got through it and registered on his brain. Then he halted in sudden wild alarm.

He was walking, not on smooth sand, but in the trampled marks of many riders.

IV

THE others came out of their stupor as he pointed, warning them to silence. The broad track curved ahead and vanished out of sight beyond a great reef of white coral. The wind had not had time to do more than blur the edges of the individual prints.

Mounting and whipping their beasts unmercifully, Carey and the others fled the track. The reef stood high above them like a wall. Along its base were cavernous holes, and they found one big enough to hold them all. Carey went on alone and on foot to the shoulder of the reef, where the riders had turned it, and the wind went with him, piping and crying in the vast honeycomb of the coral.

He crept around the shoulder and then he saw where he was.

On the other side of the reef was a dry lagoon, stretching perhaps half a mile to a coral island that stood up tall in the hard clear sunlight, its naked cliffs beautifully striated with deep rose and white and delicate pink.

A noble stairway went up from the desert to a city of walls and towers so perfectly built from many-shaded marble and so softly sculptured by time that it was difficult to tell where the work of men began and ended. Carey saw it through a shimmering haze of exhaustion and wonder, and knew that he looked at Sinharat, the Ever-Living.

The trampled track of the Shunni warriors went out across the lagoon. It swept furiously around what had been a parked flier, and then passed on, leaving behind it battered wreckage and two dark sprawled shapes. It ended at the foot of the cliffs, where Carey could see a sort of orderly turmoil of men and animals. There were between twenty-five and thirty warriors, as nearly as he could guess. They were making camp.

Carey knew what that meant. There was someone in the city.

Carey did not move for some time. He stared at the beautiful marble city shimmering on its lovely pedestal of coral. He wanted to weep, but there was not enough moisture left in him to make tears, and his despair was gradually replaced by a feeble anger. All right, you bastards, he thought. All right!

He went back to Derech and Arrin and told them what he had seen.

"Wales just came ahead of us and waited. Why bother to search a whole desert when he knew where we were going? This time he'd have us for sure. Water. We couldn't run away." Carey grinned horribly with his cracked lips and swollen tongue. "Only the Shunni found him first. War party. They must have seen the flier go over—came to check if it landed here. Caught two men in it. But the rest are in Sinharat."

"How do you know?" asked Derech.

"The Shunni won't go into the city except as a last resort. If they catch a trespasser there they just hold the well and wait. Sooner or later he comes down."

Arrin said, "How long can we wait? We've had no water for two days."

"Wait, hell," said Carey. "We can't wait. I'm going in."

Now, while they still had a shred of strength. Another day would be too late.

Derech said, "I suppose a quick spear is easier than thirst."

"We may escape both," said Carey, "if we're very careful. And very lucky."

He told them what to do.

AN hour or so later Carey followed the warriors' track out across the dry lagoon. He walked, or rather staggered, leading the animals. Arrin rode on one, her cloak pulled over her

head and her face covered in sign of mourning. Between two of the beasts, on an improvised litter made of blankets and pack lashings, Derech lay wrapped from head to foot in his cloak, a too-convincing imitation of a corpse. Carey heard the shouts and saw the distant riders start toward them, and he was frightened. The smallest slip, the most minor mistake, could give them away, and then he did not think that anything on Mars could save them. But thirst was more imperative than fear.

There was something more. Carey passed the two bodies in the sand beside the wrecked flier. He saw that they were both dark-haired Martians, and he looked at the towers of Sinharat with wolfish eyes. Wales was up there, still alive, still between him and what he wanted. Carey's hand tightened on the axe. He was no longer entirely sane on the subject of Howard Wales and the records of the Ramas.

When the riders were within spear-range he halted and rested the axe-head in the sand, as a token. He waited, saying softly, "For God's sake now, be careful."

The riders reined in, sending the sand flying. Carey said to them, "I claim the death right."

He stood swaying over his axe while they looked at him, and at the muffled woman, and at the dusty corpse. They were six, tall hard fierce-eyed men with their long spears held ready. Finally one of them said, "How did you come here?"

"My sister's husband," said Carey, indicating Derech, "died on the march to Barrakesh. Our tribal law says he must rest in his own place. But there are no caravans now. We had to come alone, and in a great sandstorm we lost the track. We wandered for many days until we crossed your trail."

"Do you know where you are?" asked the Drylander.

Carey averted his eyes from the city. "I know now. But if a man is dying it is permitted to use the well. We are dying."

"Use it, then," said the Drylander. "But keep your ill-omen away from our camp. We are going to the war as soon as we finish our business here. We want no corpse-shadow on us."

"Outlanders?" Carey asked, a rhetorical question in view of the flier and the un-Dryland bodies.

"Outlanders. Who else is foolish enough to wake the ghosts in the Forbidden City?"

Carey shook his head. "Not I. I do not wish even to see it."

The riders left them, returning to the camp. Carey moved on slowly toward the cliffs. It became apparent where the well must be. A great arching cave-mouth showed in the rose-pink

coral and men were coming and going there, watering their animals. Carey approached it and began the monotonous chant that etiquette required, asking that way be made for the dead, so that warriors and pregnant women and persons undergoing ritual purifications would be warned to go aside. The warriors made way. Carey passed out of the cruel sunlight into the shadow of an irregular vaulted passage, quite high and wide, with a floor that sloped upward, at first gently and then steeply, until suddenly the passage ended in an echoing cathedral room dimlit by torches that picked out here and there the shape of a fantastic flying buttress of coral. In the center of the room, in a kind of broad basin, was the well.

NOW for the first time Arrin broke her silence with a soft anguished cry. There were seven or eight warriors guarding the well, as Carey had known there would be, but they drew away and let Carey's party severely alone. Several men were in the act of watering their mounts, and as though in deference to tabu Carey circled around to get as far away from them as possible. In the gloom he made out the foot of an age-worn stairway leading upward through the coral. Here he stopped.

He helped Arrin down and made her sit, and then dragged Derech from the litter and laid him on the hard coral. The animals bolted for the well and he made no effort to hold them. He filled one of the bags for Arrin and then he flung himself alongside the beasts and drank and soaked himself in the beautiful cold clear water. After that he crouched still for a few moments, in a kind of daze, until he remembered that Derech too needed water.

He filled two more bags and took them to Arrin, kneeling beside her as though in tender concern as she sat beside her dead. His spread cloak covered what she was doing, holding the water-bag to Derech's mouth so that he could drink. Carey spoke softly and quickly. Then he went back to the animals. He began to fight them away from the water so that they should not founder themselves. The activity covered what was going on in the shadows behind them. Carey led them, hissing and stamping, to where Arrin and Derech had been, still using them as a shield in case the guards were watching. He snatched up his axe and the remaining water-bag and let the animals go and ran as fast as he could up the stairway. It spiralled, and he was stumbling in pitch darkness around the second curve before the guards be-

low let out a great angry cry.

He did not know whether they would follow or not. Somebody fumbled for him in the blackness and Derech's voice muttered something urgent. He could hear Arrin panting like a spent hound. His own knees shook with weakness and he thought what a fine militant crew they were to be taking on Wales and his men and thirty angry Shunni. Torchlight flickered against the turn of the wall below and there was a confusion of voices. They fled upward, pulling each other along, and it seemed that the Shunni reached a point beyond which they did not care to go. The torchlight and the voices vanished. Carey and the others climbed a little farther and then dropped exhausted on the worn treads.

Arrin asked, "Why didn't they follow us?"

"Why should they? Our water won't last long. They can wait."

"Yes," said Arrin. And then, "How *are* we going to get away?"

Carey answered, "That depends on Wales."

"I don't understand."

"On whether, and how soon, somebody sends a flier out here to see what happened to him." He patted the water-bags. "That's why these are so important. They give us time."

They started up the stair again, treading in the worn hollows made by other feet. The Ramas must have come this way for water for a very long time. Presently a weak daylight filtered down to them. And then a man's voice, tight with panic, cried out somewhere above them, "I hear them! They're coming . . ."

The voice of Howard Wales answered sharply. "Wait!" Then in English it called down, "Carey. Dr. Carey. Is that you?"

"It is," Carey shouted back.

"Thank Heaven," said Wales. "I saw you, but I wasn't sure . . . Come up, man, come up, and welcome. We're all in the same trap now."

V

SINHARAT was a city without people, but it was not dead. It had a memory and a voice. The wind gave it breath, and it sang, from the countless tiny organ-pipes of the coral, from the hollow mouths of marble doorways and the narrow throats of streets. The slender towers were like tall flutes, and the wind was never still. Sometimes the voice of Sinharat was soft and gentle, murmuring about everlasting youth and the pleasures thereof. Again it was strong and fierce with pride, crying *You die, but I do not!* Sometimes it was mad, laughing and hateful. But always the song was evil.

Carey could understand now why Sinharat was tabu. It was not only because of an ancient dread. It was the city itself, now, in the sharp sunlight or under the gliding moons. It was a small city. There had never been more than perhaps three thousand Ramas, and this remote little island had given them safety and room enough. But they had built close, and high. The streets ran like topless tunnels between the walls and the towers reached impossibly thin and tall into the sky. Some of them had lost their upper storeys and some had fallen entirely, but in the main they were still beautiful. The colors of the marble were still lovely. Many of the buildings were perfect and sound, except that wind and time had erased the carvings on their walls so that only in certain angles of light did a shadowy face leap suddenly into being, prideful and mocking with smiling lips, or a procession pass solemnly toward some obliterated worship.

Perhaps it was only the wind and the half-seen watchers that gave Sinharat its feeling of eerie wickedness. Carey did not think so. The Ramas had built something of themselves into their city, and it was rather, he imagined, as one of the Rama women might have been had one met her, graceful and lovely but with something wrong about the eyes. Even the matter-of-fact Howard Wales was uncomfortable in the city, and the three surviving City-State men who were with him went about like dogs with their tails tight to their bellies. Even Derech lost some of his cheerful arrogance, and Arrin never left his side.

The feeling was worse inside the buildings. Here were the halls and chambers where the Ramas had lived. Here were the possessions they had handled, the carvings and faded frescoes they had looked at. The ever-young, the Ever-living immortals, the stealers of others' lives, had walked these corridors and seen themselves reflected in the surfaces of polished marble, and Carey's nerves quivered with the nearness of them after all this long time.

There were traces of a day when Sinharat had had an advanced technology equal to, if not greater, than any Carey had yet seen on Mars. The inevitable reversion to the primitive had come with the exhaustion of resources. There was one rather small room where much wrecked equipment lay in crystal shards and dust, and Carey knew that this was the place where the Ramas had exchanged their old bodies for new. From some of the frescoes, done with brilliantly sadistic humor, he knew that the victims were generally killed

soon, but not too soon, after the exchange was completed.

STILL he could not find the place where the archives had been kept. Outside, Wales and his men, generally with Derech's help and Arrin as a lookout, were sweating to clear away rubble from the one square that was barely large enough for a flier to land in. Wales had been in contact with Kahora before the unexpected attack. They knew where he was, and when there had been too long a time without a report from him they would certainly come looking. If they had a landing place cleared by then, and the scanty water supply, severely rationed, kept them alive, and the Shunni did not become impatient, they would be all right.

"Only," Carey told them, "if that flier does come, be ready to jump quick. Because the Shunni will attack then."

He had not had any trouble with Howard Wales. He had expected it. He had come up the last of the stairway with his axe ready. Wales shook his head. "I have a heavy-duty shocker," he said. "Even so, I wouldn't care to take you on. You can put down the axe, Dr. Carey."

The Martians were armed too. Carey knew they could have taken him easily. Perhaps they were saving their charges against the Shunni, who played the game of war for keeps.

Carey said, "I will do what I came here to do."

Wales shrugged. "My assignment was to bring you in. I take it there won't be any more trouble about that now—if any of us get out of here. Incidentally, I saw what was happening at Barrakesh, and I can testify that you could not possibly have had any part in it. I'm positive that some of my superiors are thundering asses, but that's nothing new, either. So go ahead. I won't hinder you."

Carey had gone ahead, on a minimum of water, sleep, and the dry desert rations he had in his belt-pouch. Two and a half days were gone, and the taste of defeat was getting stronger in his mouth by the hour. Time was getting short, no one could say how short. And then almost casually he crawled over a great fallen block of marble into a long room with rows of vault doors on either side, and a hot wave of excitement burned away his weariness. The bars of beautiful rustless alloy slid easily under his hands. And he was dazed at the treasure of knowledge that he had found, tortured by the realization that he could only take a fraction of it with him and might well never see the rest of it again.

THE Ramas had arranged their massive archives according to a simple and orderly dating system. It did not take him long to find the records he wanted, but even that little time was almost too much.

Derech came shouting after him. Carey closed the vault he was in and scrambled back over the fallen block, clutching the precious spools. "Flier!" Derech kept saying. "Hurry!" Carey could hear the distant cries of the Shunni.

He ran with Derech and the cries came closer. The warriors had seen the flier too and now they knew that they must come into the city. Carey raced through the narrow twisting street that led to the square. When he came into it he could see the flier hanging on its rotors about thirty feet overhead, very ginger about coming down in that cramped space. Wales and the Martians were frantically waving. The Shunni came in two waves, one from the well-stair and one up the cliffs. Carey picked up his axe. The shockers began to crackle.

He hoped they would hold the Drylanders off because he did not want to have to kill anyone, and he particularly did not want to get killed, not right now. "Get to the flier!" Wales yelled at him, and he saw that it was just settling down, making a great wind and dust. The warriors in the forefront of the attack were dropping or staggering as the stunning charges hit them, sparking off their metal ornaments and the tips of their spears. The first charge was broken up, but no one wanted to stay for the second. Derech had Arrin and was lifting her bodily into the flier. Hands reached out and voices shouted unnecessary pleas for haste. Carey threw away his axe and jumped for the hatch. The Martians crowded in on top of him and then Wales, and the pilot took off so abruptly that Wales' legs were left dangling outside. Carey caught him and pulled him in. Wales laughed, in an odd wild way, and the flier rose up among the towers of Sinharat in a rattle of flung spears.

* * *

The technicians had had trouble regearing their equipment to the Rama microtapes. The results were still far from perfect, but the United Worlds Planetary Assistance Committee, hastily assembled at Kahora, were not interested in perfection. They were Alan Woodthorpe's superiors, and they had a decision to make, and little time in which to make it. The great tide was beginning to roll north out of the Drylands, moving at the steady

marching pace of the desert beasts. And Woodthorpe could no longer blame this all on Carey.

Looking subdued and rather frightened, Woodthorpe sat beside Carey in the chamber where the hearing was being held. Derech was there, and Wales, and some high brass from the City-States who were getting afraid for their borders, and two Dryland chiefs who knew Carey as Carey, not as a tribesman, and trusted him enough to come in. Carey thought bitterly that this hearing should have been held long ago. Only the Committee had not understood the potential seriousness of the situation. They had been told, plainly and often. But they had preferred to believe experts like Woodthorpe rather than men like Carey, who had some specialized knowledge but were not trained to evaluate the undertaking as a whole.

Now in a more chastened mood they watched as Carey's tapes went whispering through the projectors.

They saw an island city in a blue sea. People moved in its streets. There were ships in its harbors and the sounds of life. Only the sea had shrunk down from the tops of the coral cliffs. The lagoon was a shallow lake wide-rimmed with beaches, and the outer reef stood bare above a feeble surf. A man's voice spoke in the ancient High Martian, somewhat distorted by the reproduction and blurred by the voice of a translator speaking Esperanto. Carey shut his ears to everything but the voice, the man, who spoke across the years.

"Nature grins at us these days, reminding us that even planets die. We who have loved life so much that we have taken the lives of countless others in order to retain it, can now see the beginning of our own inevitable end. Even though this may yet be thousands of years in the future, the thought of it has had strange effects. For the first time some of our people are voluntarily choosing death. Others demand younger and younger hosts, and change them constantly. Most of us have come to have some feeling of remorse, not for our immortality but for the method by which we achieved it.

"One murder can be remembered and regretted. Ten thousand murders become as meaningless as ten thousand love affairs or ten thousand games of chess. Time and repetition grind them all to the same dust. Yet now we do regret, and a naive passion has come to us, a passion to be forgiven, if not by our victims then perhaps by ourselves.

"Thus our great project is undertaken. The people of Kharif, because their coasts are accessible and their young people ex-

ceptionally handsome and sturdy, have suffered more from us than any other single nation. We will try now to make some restitution."

THE scene shifted from Sinharat to a desolate stretch of desert coastline beside the shrunken sea. The land had once been populous. There were the remains of cities and town, connected by paved roads. There had been factories and power stations, all the appurtenances of an advanced technology. These were now rusting away, and the wind blew ochre dust to bury them.

"For a hundred years," said the Rama voice, "it has not rained."

There was an oasis, with wells of good water. Tall brown-haired men and women worked the well-sweeps, irrigating fields of considerable extent. There was a village of neat huts, housing perhaps a thousand people.

"Mother Mars has killed far more of her children than we. The fortunate survivors live in 'cities' like these. The less fortunate . . ."

A long line of beasts and hooded human shapes moved across a bitter wasteland. And the Dryland chiefs cried out, "Our people!"

"We will give them water again," said the Rama voice.

The spool ended. In the brief interval before the next one began, Woodthorpe coughed uneasily and muttered, "This was all long ago, Carey. The winds of change . . ."

"Are blowing up a real storm, Woodthorpe. You'll see why."

The tapes began again. A huge plant now stood at the edge of the sea, distilling fresh water from the salt. A settlement had sprung up beside it, with fields and plantations of young trees.

"It has gone well," said the Rama voice. "It will go better with time, for their short generations move quickly."

The settlement became a city. The population grew, spread, built more cities, planted more crops. The land flourished.

"Many thousands live," the Rama said, "who would otherwise not have been born. We have repaid our murders."

The spool ended.

Woodthorpe said, "But we're not trying to atone for anything. We . . ."

"If my house burns down," said Carey, "I do not greatly care whether it was by a stroke of lightning, deliberate arson, or a child playing with matches. The end result is the same."

The third spool began.

A different voice spoke now. Carey wondered if the owner of the first had chosen death himself, or simply lacked the heart

to go on with the record. The distilling plant was wearing out and metals for repair were poor and difficult to find. The solar batteries could not be replaced. The stream of water dwindled. Crops died. There was famine and panic, and then the pumps stopped altogether and the cities were stranded like the hulks of ships in dry harbors.

THE Rama voice said, "These are the consequences of the one kind act we have ever done. Now these thousands that we called into life must die as their forebears did. The cruel laws of survival that we caused them to forget are all to be learned again. They had suffered once, and mastered it, and were content. Now there is nothing we can do to help. We can only stand and watch."

"Shut it off," said Woodthorpe.

"No," said Carey, "see it out."

They saw it out.

"Now," said Carey, "I will remind you that Kharif was the homeland from which most of the Drylands were settled." He was speaking to the Committee more than to Woodthorpe. "These so-called primitives have been through all this before, and they have long memories. Their tribal legends are explicit about what happened to them the last time they put their trust in the transitory works of men. Now can you understand why they're so determined to fight?"

Woodthorpe looked at the disturbed and frowning faces of the Committee. "But," he said, "it wouldn't be like that now. Our resources . . ."

"Are millions of miles away on other planets. How long can you guarantee to keep *your* pumps working? And the Ramas at least had left the natural water sources for the survivors to go back to. You want to destroy those so they would have nothing." Carey glanced at the men from the City-States. "The City-States would pay the price for that. They have the best of what there is, and with a large population about to die of famine and thirst . . ." He shrugged, and then went on,

"There are other ways to help. Food and medicines. Education, to enable the young people to look for greener pastures in other places, if they wish to. In the meantime, there is an army on the move. You have the power to stop it. You've heard all there is to be said. Now the chiefs are waiting to hear what you will say."

The Chairman of the Committee conferred with the members. The conference was quite brief.

"Tell the chiefs," the Chairman said, "that it is not our intent to create wars. Tell them to go in peace. Tell them the Re-

habilitation Project for Mars is cancelled."

* * *

The great tide rolled slowly back into the Drylands and dispersed. Carey went through a perfunctory hearing on his activities, took his reprimand and dismissal with a light heart, shook hands with Howard Wales, and went back to Jekkara, to drink with Derech and walk beside the Low-Canal that would be there now for whatever ages were left to it in the slow course of a planet's dying.

And this was good. But at the end of the canal was Barrakesh, and the southward-moving caravans, and the long road to Sinharat. Carey thought of the vaults beyond the fallen block of marble, and he knew that someday he would walk that road again.

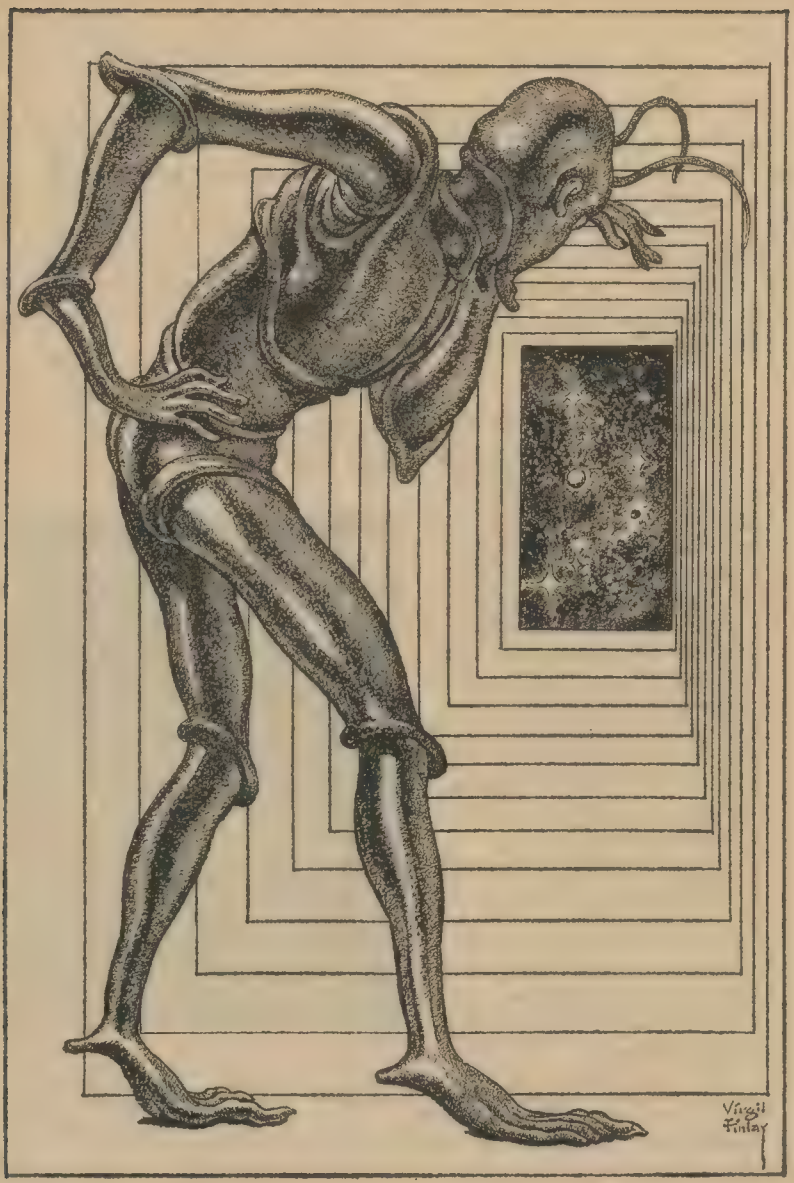
THE END

COMING NEXT MONTH

They lived in a Hive. They got up at Light-of-Day and went to their quarters at Ultrablack. They existed in terror of their Speaksters and the Goons. And their world exploded when the real truth was forced open by a young rebel and a beautiful, hunted girl. **Jack Sharkey** headlines the June AMAZING with his new novel, *The Programmed People*, a realistic view of a possible future.

The *SF Profilee* in June will be—in answer to many requests—**Eric Frank Russell**, whose explorations into Fortean phenomena have made him one of the most controversial of science fiction and nonfiction writers.

Top-notch short stories (including ones by Ballard and Zelazny), plus all our regular features, round out a compelling June AMAZING. It will be on sale at your newsstands May 9.


Virgil
Finlay

WHERE IS EVERYBODY?

By BEN BOVA

In this analysis of the possibilities of galactic contact by other beings, Ben Bova concludes his remarkable survey of the facts and theories of extraterrestrial life. And his conclusion may surprise you!

IT was Enrico Fermi, the late Nobel Prize-winning physicist, who asked the question. His reasoning was basically this:

The universe is so vast that, according to mere blind chance, there must be literally billions of planetary systems. With so many planets available, it is incomprehensible that intelligent life should have evolved only on Earth. There must be many—millions, at least—of intelligent races elsewhere in space. But the universe is much older than the Earth. Therefore, the chances are that intelligent races exist who are much older than man, and therefore much more advanced. It is not impossible to imagine many races so far advanced that they have solved the problems of interstellar flight, and are exploring the galaxies. If this is true, then:

Where is everybody? Why have they not established contact with us? Or, putting the question the other way 'round, is the fact that we have *not* received interstellar visitors proof that *no* intelligent life exists in space?

There are usually two reasons given for our lack of interstellar tourists. The first is the "grain of sand" argument; the second is the "postage stamp" analogy.

THE "GRAIN OF SAND" ARGUMENT

This argument uses a poetic

metaphor to make its point: A man can walk across a very large beach without much difficulty. He can chart its shoreline and depths, its contour and headlands. But—*can he inspect every grain of sand on the beach?*

In other words, even assuming that an advanced race could develop imterstellar travel, could they explore every one of the Milky Way's 100 billion stars in an effort to find other intelligent races? Stated in this manner, the prospects for interstellar contact sound dim indeed. But let us examine this argument a little more closely. Basically, it involves two facets: the ability to achieve interstellar flight, and the ability to investigate very large numbers of stars. An intelligent race *could* develop the technology necessary for interstellar flight. And it need not inspect every one of the Milky Way's 100 billion stars. Some stars are manifestly inhospitable to the evolution of life; many others are too young to have allowed intelligence time enough to develop (see "Life Among The Stars, AMAZING, November, 1962). Moreover, our Solar System is situated away from the center of the galaxy, out where the stars are relatively far apart. At the galaxy's heart, where the oldest stars are, interstellar distances must be less than half of those in our region of space.

It is possible, then to envision an intelligent race scouting the galaxy in a highly purposeful fashion, seeking out stars that are old and stable enough to have sponsored intelligent life. With use of powerful radio receivers or other detection devices, interstellar explorers might be able to find inhabited planets at very great distances. So it would seem that while our planet is indeed a single grain of sand on the vast shores of space, an intelligent race might find us if it had enough energy, time and purpose.

THE "POSTAGE STAMP" ANALOGY

The question of purpose brings us to the "postage stamp" analogy. You have no doubt seen this picture painted by astronomers and anthropologists alike: Consider the history of the Earth. Let the height of the Empire State Building represent the planet's five billion years of existence. Man's one-million-year tenure on Earth can then be represented by a one-foot ruler, standing at the very top of the building. A dime placed atop the ruler represents the entire span of man's civilization. And, at the very top of the whole wobbly conglomerate, is glued a postage stamp—this represents the length of time since man has developed modern science.

Considering the immense span of time of man's habitation of

Earth, our technological culture —the postage stamp—is pathetically thin. If other intelligent races exist, what are the chances of our meeting a race at exactly our own level of development? Within the thickness of the postage stamp, that is. They will either be far below or far beyond us, technologically. But the second point of the analogy partially contradicts this. Several cosmologically-minded thinkers have arrived at the conclusion that technology may be only a passing phase in the development of an intelligent race. Perhaps it is only in the first blush of its youth that a race is interested in exploring the stars. This type of reasoning is typified by Sebastian von Hoerner, of the Astronomical Research Institute of Heidelberg, who states that an intelligent race is bound either to destroy itself or to stagnate within a few hundred, or at best, a few thousand years after reaching the modern Earthly level of technology. In other words, the postage stamp may grow as thick as a dime, but certainly no thicker. Is this a reasonable assumption? Will man destroy himself? Or will he become a passive, stagnant lotus-eater, served by his machines until his ultimate (and not-too-distant) extinction?

Let us be optimistic and assume that man or any intelligent race) will not destroy himself. Will he become stagnant? Is the technological "state of mind" that has created our civilization merely a passing fancy? Anthropologists have amassed some solid evidence that points entirely in the opposite direction.

Man, they say, did not become master of this planet by accident, nor is his technology merely the latest fancy of a fickle "state of mind." Even before man was fully human he was a maker and user of tools. The wheel and the plow were invented about 10,000 B.C. The so-called modern era of science, dating roughly from Copernicus, Galileo and Newton, is not completely different from the eras that preceded it. The technology that we are so justly proud of did not spring full-blown from the minds of a few brilliant men. It was the product of generations of effort. Our modern society today represents not so much a break with the past as an acceleration of past trends, speeded by the gathering forces of technical methods and accumulated scientific knowledge. In short, an intelligent race is apt to be technologically oriented, and *un*likely to give up its technology.

It would seem, then, that the postage stamp atop the Empire State Building is an artifact. Man's technology may be very

young, but so is man himself. As long as he has been human, he has been a tool-wielder. If and when we meet other intelligent races, the chances are that the technologies will be fully as old as they are. Thus, if we meet an older race, its technology will be far advanced over ours. And if we find a younger race, its talents will be similarly undeveloped. Which are we more likely to find?

THE "SECOND GENERATION" PRINCIPLE

So far we have tested two lines of speculation and concluded that: (1) An intelligent race could reach us if it wanted to; (2) Once a race depelops technology, it is not likely to dispose of it and return to nature. But our original question remains unanswered. If intelligent races abound among the stars, why have they not visited us? Is man alone in his intelligence and technology?

One key to these questions depends on the "geography" of space. In earlier articles we traced the origin of the solar system and its life back to a primeval cloud of interstellar gas. We saw that this cloud began to condense some five billion years ago, and ultimately produced the Sun and planets. We also saw that a similar sequence of events could take place anywhere throughout the Milky Way galaxy. Now let us examine the Milky Way as a whole to see where the oldest stars and—presumably—the oldest and most advanced intelligent life forms are apt to be.

Astronomers are still not at all certain of the age of our galaxy, but we can pick 10 billion years as a convenient value. Ten billion years ago, there was no Milky Way galaxy, no stars, no planets, no life. Only a vast, distended cloud of tenuous gas—a nearly-perfect vacuum by human standards, but so large that it contained more than 200 billion times the mass of our Sun. (Where this gas came from is a cosmological question that will be carefully avoided here.) This tremendous cloud consisted of hydrogen atoms, simple protons and electrons. Nothing more. Much of this primordial gas is still present between the stars today; we see it in the brilliant swirls of nebulae, we hear its 21-centimeter-wavelength "song" on our radio telescopes.

In some unknown manner, the cloud began to rotate and contract. As it did so, tiny swirls and eddies began to appear, to break into still smaller whirls and ultimately to produce stars. (The first stars, evidently, were produced in large batches. We can see them today. They are very ancient globular clusters which may contain 100,000 or a million individual stars, packed together as closely as the planets

of our own solar system.) As the original gas cloud continued to rotate and contract it produced many more stars. The nucleus of the Milky Way is so thick with stars that our own region of the galaxy, out toward the edge, must be classed as a stellar desert. Thus the central portions of our galaxy, according to astronomical theory, contain the oldest stars.

As the gas cloud condensed, its rotation became faster. Its shape became flattened, bulging at the center. Finally, to maintain stability, the cloud began to fling off great belts of gas from its middle. These belts—long, twisted filaments of star-producing gas—became the spiral arms of our galaxy, thousands of light-years in cross-section, tens of thousands of light-years in length. In one of these belts, known as the Carina-Cygnus Arm, is the Sun and our Solar System, some 25,000 light-years from the star-thronged center of the galaxy.

It would appear, then, that our Sun is a latecomer to the galaxy. Indeed, astronomers refer to the Sun as a "second generation" star. Of course, many of the stars in our reigon of the galaxy are much younger. Sirius, for example, can hardly be more than a few hundred million years old, and Rigel is probably no older than man himself—one million years.

Before we go any further, we had better straighten out a bit of astronomical jargon. Astronomers frequently refer to two types of stars in the Milky Way. Stars in our own quarter of the galaxy—including the Sun—are called Population I. Other stars, such as those nearer the galaxy's center and in the globular clusters, are called Population II. The confusing thing is that the Population II stars are *older*, hence are "first generation" stars, while the younger Population I stars are "second generation." In addition to their different locations in the galaxy, Population II stars apparently have rather different chemical compositions than our own neighbors of Population I. This difference is one of degree, and at first glimpse would seem trivial: Population II stars are comparatively poor in heavier elements. Now, *all* stars of *all* populations are about 99 percent hydrogen and helium; the younger the star, the higher the percentage of hydrogen compared to helium. In any case, the heavier elements—such as the metals—are restricted to about one percent of the star's mass. But, just as in a detective story, this seemingly insignificant fact is a critical clue.

The older Population II stars are metal-poor. The younger Population I stars are relatively metal-rich. If the galaxy began

with nothing but hydrogen gas where did the metals come from?

THE STELLAR COOKERS

The answer to that riddle was first proposed about a dozen years ago by a group of English astronomers and methematicians, among them Thomas Gold, Fred Hoyle and Hermann Bondi. The stars are nuclear cookers, they said. We know that the Sun is fusing hydrogen into helium, and in the process converting four million tons of mass into energy every second. But, said Gold, Hoyle and Bondi, this is only the beginning of a star's career. At a certain point in its lifetime (some five billion years from now, for the Sun) a star reaches a critical stage. Its hydrogen fuel is becoming depleted. At the core of the star is a large amount of helium—"ash" from the hydrogen fires—under tremendous pressure and, consequently, at very high temperatures, perhaps 100 million degrees Kelvin.

Under these conditions, the helium will begin to fuse into heavier elements: oxygen, carbon, neon. Eventually, the star goes on to produce constantly heavier elements at constantly higher internal temperatures. Finally the star runs out of energy sources, collapses and explodes. Most of its material—from hydrogen on up through the heavier elements— is hurled out into space. This is a supernova.

The theory that results is that the older Population II stars "cooked" the heavier elements within their cores and then spewed them out in supernova explosions. (Supernovas occur about once every 500 years in the Milky Way, on the average.) The remnants flung into interstellar space mix with the primeval hydrogen and thus provide new raw material for "second generation" stars. But notice that these newer stars have a much richer raw material to build with—it contains helium, oxygen, neon, iron and many other elements. Even rare, short-lived radioactive elements, such as Californium (an "artificial" element on Earth) have been observed in the spectra of old Population II stars.

Now then, what has all this stellar cookery to do with the possibilities of intelligent life throughout the galaxy? Simply this:

The oldest stars in the Milky Way were built on hydrogen alone. They could not have planetary systems like ours because the heavier elements were not yet available. There might be a few spheres of frozen hydrogen circling these stars at great distances, but they would be sterile worlds.

The Sun is a Population I star, a "second generation" luminary.

It possesses a relatively large amount of heavy elements; it also possesses a planetary system that harbors life and intelligence. But the Sun is a rather old Population I star—age, five billion years, about half as old as the entire Milky Way galaxy. Can it be that the first five billion years of the galaxy's existence were spent mainly in building up heavier elements so that "second generation" stars like the Sun could arise and produce planets, life and intelligence? If so, then we might well be one of the first intelligent races in the Milky Way. The teeming center of the galaxy might be devoid of life and intelligence.

THE CLOSED DOOR, OPEN WINDOW POLICY

Although this kind of astronomical evidence might lend support to the speculation that we are among the galaxy's elder citizens, we should be very careful about reaching conclusions from an admittedly oversimplified paste-up of assumptions and theories. The idea has a certain satisfaction to it from an egocentric point of view, and it goes a long way toward explaining why They have not visited Earth. There might not *be* any of Them. Or, if there are, They might not yet have attained the advanced technology necessary for interstellar flight.

But to assume that we are in first place in the galaxy's IQ rating is rash indeed. If astronomy has taught man anything it is the painful fact that we are not special creatures in any sense of the term. Our star is an average one, and the conditions that led to the formation of our planet and ourselves are probably not very extraordinary. Even granting that we might be among the elder citizens of the Milky Way, we must assume that among the galaxy's 100 billion stars there are some that harbor much more intelligent species.

Then the question returns again: Where is everybody?

Imagine a race of intelligent creatures, human beings, living in their own world. They have developed in isolation, and have split into many local cultures, some have advanced to high civilizations, others have remained struggling in the Stone Age. But all of them are members of a fully human species, and as intelligent as we are. Suddenly, their world is visited by a vastly superior race. To simplify matters, we will assume that the visitors are also human in form. The first contacts are friendly enough. Soon, though, it becomes clear that the visitors have measured the natives and found them lacking. The visitors begin to take over the natives' world.

Fighting begins. The natives

lack the advanced technology of their opponents. Within a few generations the natives cease to exist, except for scattered tribes in the back country. The natives have not merely been beaten in a war. They have been virtually extinguished by a superior culture. Through intermarriage, through susceptibility to new diseases, through an emotional response that can only be described as "racial shock," the natives either die away or are genetically engulfed by the newcomers. This actually happened to the American Indians.

What would happen if a vastly superior race suddenly dropped out of the blue, straightened out our political squabbles, handed us a child's primer of fusion reactors, and generally took over the planet? Could our deep-grained pride stand such a shock, or would we go into a racial decline? Look at it another way. Anthropologists are interested in studying man's nearest relative, the primate apes. A good deal has been learned by observing chimpanzees and other apes in captivity. But the basic question of why we live in cities while our closest relatives live in trees can only be answered by studying the primates in their natural habitat. This is not easy to do because the key to the entire scheme is that the animals under scrutiny *must never know they are being watched.* Only by remaining "invisible" can the scientists learn how apes behave naturally.

Now let us consider the reactions of an advanced race that discovers intelligent life on the planet Earth. It seems reasonable to assume that the ethics of an intelligent race will advance together with its technology, even if the ethics advance more slowly. Any race capable of developing interstellar travel, it would seem, should also be intelligent and ethical enough to observe a relatively primitive race like our own without interfering with us. Why should they contact us? They have far more to learn by keeping us under surveillence. Thus, they might well have a "closed door" policy about contacting us, but an "open window" attitude about observing us. Where is everybody? If you assume that: (1) an intelligent race can develop interstellar travel; (2) such a race can detect signs of intelligence at great distances in space; and (3) one or more such races have indeed evolved on "second generation" stars—then the answer may be this: They may be watching us right now, using us to learn more about the phenomenon called intelligence, and waiting for us to reach the maturity necessary before we can join them as galactic equals.

THE END

By S. E. COTTS

The Space Child's Mother Goose. *Verses by Frederick Winsor. Illustrations by Marian Parry. Simon and Schuster. Paper: $1.25.*

This book is exactly what the title says it is, a nursery rhyme book using people, terms and jokes from the world of science and science fiction. It is not a book to be enjoyed at one sitting, but read a bit at a time.

The drawings by Marian Parry are superb—small, neat thin-lined figures with a good deal of whimsical personality. Some of the more geometrical pages have a resemblance to the cartoonist, Steinberg, but this does nothing to detract from them. As I recall, two of the most hilarious are the Chinese kite-flying scene and the Egyptian wall-painting one.

The text is another matter. There is hardly a verse that lacks some good lines, but very few are good from start to finish. Often this failure is due to faulty or forced meter. And if there's one thing nursery rhymes must have, it's a steady, invariable, foot-tapping rhythm, which is what makes them so ideal for skipping, chanting, rope jumping, circle games et al.

A great deal of fun can be had by trying to identify the original nursery rhyme which Mr. Winsor is parodying. Two of my favorites were "Solomon Grundy" and "The Hydrogen Dog and the Cobalt Cat." The non-science minded will have trouble getting the point of some of the offerings. For the sake of these people, there is a glossary of terms in the back, but even with it the going will probably be rough. Yet though the language is esoteric, the author is not blinded by science's wonders; in fact, the prevailing tone is one of warning about the dangers that are here, or just around the corner, as a result of our technological advances.

Moon Missing. *Text and Illustrations by Edward Sorel. Simon and Schuster. Paper. $1.50.*

Moon Missing tells, through news releases with different datelines, the story of the chaos that develops when (you guessed it) the moon fails to appear.

Edward Sorel's work suffers from the same good and bad points that affect the Mother Goose book insofar as the drawings are superb, but the text is of mixed quality. Here any similarity ends. The whole intent and execution are miles apart. In the Mother Goose, the drawings were small and extremely tidy and finely detailed. And whatever moral or message was imbedded in the verses was put forth in a comparatively gentle and understated fashion.

Mr. Sorel is a bird of different feathers altogether. His indictments are scathing, his drawings fall into the category of caricatures slashed on the page with a passion which makes detail work superfluous, and his text (dealing as it does with living men) sometimes crosses the line which divides justifiable satire from bad taste. It is very difficult to get riled up about this last point, however, since some of his worst lapses in this respect happen to be, at the same time, howlingly funny (as an example, his drawing of the books on Richard Nixon's shelf.)

With the re-appearance of the moon at the end of the book, Mr. Sorel becomes a trifle more mellow, but his transformation comes a bit too late to help the heap of prominent men and institutions he has left strewn behind him. There is absolutely nobody whom Mr. Sorel likes, be it in government, business, the arts.

Perhaps the main doubt about Mr. Sorel's book is that it is so completely topical. Not only is it a book of NOW, the PRESENT, but it is also only the NOW and the PRESENT of people who are incredibly well-informed about all phases of modern life. There is hope here, however; for the larger the number of people who can understand and laugh at Mr. Sorel's situations, the safer we will be from falling a victim to them.

They Walked Like Men. *By Clifford D. Simak. 234 pp. Doubleday & Company, Inc. $3.95.*

By now, the odds are that a Simak novel will have two things for sure: elements of humor and an alien of completely lovable temperament. The latest Simak novel is no exception. In addition it also has suspense as well as humor, and this time bad aliens as well as good.

The bodily form in which Mr. Simak clothes his villain and his hero would be a dead give-away

as to which was which, even if their actions weren't. The evil one looks like a bowling ball and the good one like a large shaggy dog. Actually, after Mr. Simak's magnum opus, *City*, I cannot conceive of his ever making a dog the "bad guy" in one of his books.

Mr. Simak's story is a great deal more serious than this rather bizarre cast of characters makes it seem. Earth is the scene of a mammoth alien invasion. But these aliens have not warred openly with the people of Earth. Their tactic is to stay under cover and undermine the whole structure of society by using its own laws against it. Their very presence is not suspected until they have already gained control of a large part of the world's industry and land (by strictly legal means). But these aliens don't want the Earth for themselves. When they have full control, they plan to barter it away. Eventually it will become a mammoth vacation land, because there is a shortage of really beautiful, comfortable planets for this purpose.

Simak's tale covers the few days from the time a newspaperman, Parker Graves, first becomes aware of the menace, until he uncovers the aliens. Along the way he has the forseeable difficulty of convincing a few helpers that he isn't drunk or crazy. The Dog-like "Good Guy" alien, who has come to Earth to warn people against the other, unscrupulous aliens, is a great help in this respect.

As is to be expected, they all live happily ever after, and in hands other than Simak's such ridiculous bits and pieces would be just that and nothing more. Fortunately for us all, Mr. Simak still has the alchemy to make the ridiculous, entertaining, and, on occasion, even filled with truth.

Anything You Can Do . . . *By Darrel T. Langart. 192 pp. Doubleday & Company, Inc. $3.50.*

An alien of a completely different kind is featured in this novel by Darrel Langart. One reason for the lovableness of the Simak "Good Guy" aliens is the manner in which Simak grafts human emotions or attitudes onto his other-worldly creatures. Darrel Langart does something very different with his alien, the Nipe. He has set out to give it a pattern of thoughts and actions as a-human as possible, and he succeeds quite nicely. At the very least, the Nipe acts in a consistent fashion according to the principles with which the author has endowed it.

An accident to its spacecraft and the destruction of its communication made it necessary for the Nipe to land on Earth. Though its subsequent behavior

seems, to the horror-stricken Earth population, to show a total disregard of human life and decency, its actions are all motivated by two desires—to find materials in order to build another communicator with which to reach its homeland, and to find the Earth's Real People. The Nipe cannot believe that the pitiful two-legged creatures it sees can be the ruling life form. Their reflexes are too slow (its are razor-fast), and they don't follow the Customs (of devouring their own dead, among others).

To achieve the first aim, the Nipe becomes a master criminal, stealing what parts and tools it needs. To achieve the second, it learns human languages and contacts what it takes to be high-ranking officials. But they all react incorrectly to the alien.

It might have been possible to destroy the Nipe, but in view of all that could be learned from such an alien visitor, it is decided to develop a super-human to trap it alive. This delicate mental and medical task is entrusted to the Neurophysical Institute, and Bart Stanton is the trainee.

Unfortunately, Mr. Langart has as much trouble with the technical construction of his story as the Nipe does with his communicator. The flashback interludes are much too sketchy, considering what tricks the author plays with his hero, Bart Stanton, in the end. This much-vaunted trick ending falls flat for two reasons. First of all, the battle between Stanton and the Nipe is so obviously the climax to the story (and an exciting one, too) that his revelation about Stanton can only be a disappointing anti-climax.

In the second place, since the bulk of the story deals with the Nipe, and with Stanton's preparation for it, an ending that fills in material irrelevant to the central Nipe-Stanton, Nipe-Earth conflicts has had too little preparation to have much force.

Despite these criticisms, there is no gainsaying that this is an interesting book. To be sure, errors of form in writing are far less serious than errors in content or in style.

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(*Continued from page 55*)

very same time. Actually, though, it's only one thing at a time. Now, imagine you lose interest in both situations while a radio starts playing some music. A second radio comes in with other music. By shifting attention back and forth you may manage to identify both but you're really not hearing either one very well. And imagine what would happen if a third stream of music started up at the same time!"

"That's right, you can only consciously follow one thing at a time," Crawford nodded. His eyes widened with horror. "They don't think that way at all! They were listening at the spaceport to musics and they see all these different things happening on the screen at the same time and follow it, don't they?"

"Which gives them the capacity to learn anything at tremendous speed," said Stern. "Take manually driving a ground vehicle. We learn one operation until we can do it automatically, *un*thinkingly, then we learn another operation to the same point, reinforcing our first knowledge with the new acquirement, and so on. For all practical purposes *they* could learn almost everything about such a matter at the same time, instantly!"

Stern stared at the star chart on the Command Room's wall, and wondered whether the inward side of man was equally vast.

THE END

A MESSAGE TO READERS

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(*Continued from page 4*)

rect in his assumption that the writers of past days were better writers than those of today. The percentage of better writers today is far greater than it was forty or so years ago. The house of science-fiction is an abode made with many blocks. Wells and Verne are the foundation. The blocks near the bottom are comprised of the older writers. The newer writers are nearer the top of the ever growing edifice. All are needed to support the roof.

Jas. C. Pierce
836 E. Claremont 3
Phoenix 14, Arizona

Dear Miss Goldsmith:

The letter from Lorne Yacuk, in the January issue, caused a violent reaction. I will use mighty strong language on anyone trying to discredit the growing-up of sf. I would do as He (She?) suggest and tear up his (her?) letter, if doing so would not ruin my copy of AMAZING.

It seems that you, Mr. (Mrs.) Yacuk, have a very odd idea of the common man, i.e., a Bum and/or Drunk. Since when is the common man a Bum and/or Drunk? I resent that. Your idea of the ordinary Joe is as warped as your swashbuckling hero. I ask you now, would an anti-human select a superhuman to begin his conquest with? He would more likely pick someone with less powers, i.e., *The Common Man,* would he not?

No longer is the world blessed (?) with the John Carter type of hero with superhuman stamina, courage, strength, and cunning. Perhaps you would like Tarzan, on top of a bull elephant, outwitting visitors from you-can't-tell-where? Please, oh *please,* let the common man handle the evil creatures, be he drunk, crazy, or sober. Let sf mature, without dragging it back from the depths out of which it has climbed!

A/2C W. D. Shepard
AF 18603033
Box 491, 329th FIS
George AFB, Calif.

● *Yes, but who will admit to being just a "common man?"*

Dear Editor:

Mr. Yacuk in the January issue denies the return of the superduperman: the "bum" is today's stereotype. Well, wasn't the "giant" of a man yesterday's stereotype? If this giant has always been popular, why isn't he prevalent in today's sf?

Perhaps the reader can sympathize with the common man, he can identify himself with this poor ordinary man with his common shortcomings. With Super Charlie, we have a kind of wish fulfillment, a dream character who can't possibly exist; can

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there be such an abundance of perfection in one man?

Maybe we should see-saw back and forth between Common Fred and Super Charlie; or achieve a happy medium, Super Charlie with a touch of Fred's shortcomings.

The superman story is all very fine—if you like no character development; but then you don't really need such development because, after all, aren't all supermen alike? Maybe Mr. Yacuk should go back to Superman Comics. Give me the common man. At least in a perilous situation he needs to reason, to *think*.

Gil Lamont
1970 Masters
Christella Heights
Beloit, Wisconsin

Dear Editor:

Hurrah for Albert Teichner and "Cerebrum." I found it to be one of the most entertaining short stories that you have ever published. It gave a wonderful insight into the man of the future, one of the most impressive stories of the future population of the earth since "Unto Us a Child is Born" by David H. Keller in your Jan. 1961 edition.

Let's have more of Mr. Teichner.

Paul Gilster
42 Godwin Lane
St. Louis (24), Mo.

● *All right.*

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